



## English Tales in Verse

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# English Tales in Verse

SELECTED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

C. H. HERFORD, M.A., Litt.D.

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## NOTE

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C. H. Herford.*

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## INTRODUCTION

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THE Tale in Verse marks the contact of two lines of literary growth which have often blended, but stand in no constant relation, and in modern times have been apt to run apart. The shepherd under the hawthorn has probably in all ages *told his tale* (in every sense of the phrase) in homely prose. But the tale of literature has passed through the whole gamut of phases which divide the realistic novel of to-day from the thirteenth-century romances of Arthur or the modern romaunt of the *Lady of the Lake*. The extant story-literature of the earliest times is all in verse; the lyric mood of the primeval chant still lingers in the heroic lay, as it does in that brief tale of the Creation which embalms the new-found inspiration of Cædmon. Even in Chaucer, verse is still the natural garb of story; if his blithe tongue anywhere halts and hobbles, it is when he is constraining it to 'talk prose' in the tale of Melibeus. For pure narrative quality Chaucer's verse is unsurpassed in English. The subsequent development of English verse lies rather in the regions of drama and lyric than of epic; its most potent mastery of expression has been achieved in an atmosphere of strong personal emotion or penetrating imaginative analysis; the great solitary example of Milton apart, English



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literature has hardly evolved an epic style. The lyric and dramatic imagination of the sixteenth century, the curious far-reaching intellect of the seventeenth, the satiric and moralizing reflections of the eighteenth, turned the main currents of verse-style aside from the simple ends of story. Spenser drove it in large undulating eddies along his spacious stanza; Shakespeare tossed it flashing and foaming hither and thither under the stress of his passion and his thought; Cowley forced it to take the ply of his curious fancy; and Waller began that process of polarizing it into antithesis and crystallizing it into epigram which reached its consummation under the dexterous touch of Pope. Throughout the eighteenth century, narrative verse, unless quickened by the zest of satire or burlesque, was something of a *tour de force*; the recounting pen willingly meandered into description, or subsided into sentiment. Then, in very happy time, came to the rescue 'the other harmony of prose'; a cool, indifferent, flexible material, fitted to take the mental mould of the genial but unromantic observers who created the English novel, and long since freed by Dryden from the traditional rhetoric which might have thwarted and perverted their natural vein. The temper of the modern novel has been preponderatingly the temper of prose; and no verse since Chaucer's could have adequately conveyed the wealth of matter-of-fact observation and robust humour in which its strength has lain. Yet verse was not to perish as a vehicle of story. The nineteenth century recovery of poetry was effected largely through the channel of romance;

and many of its typical poets loved to convey their 'criticism of life' through symbols of myth or idyll, instead of, like their predecessors of the eighteenth, through formal treatises in verse. The *Idylls of the King* are Tennyson's 'Essay on Man'.

The term 'Tale in Verse', strictly taken, includes the entire field of English poetry narrative or 'epic' in kind, from *Paradise Lost* to *Miss Kilmansegg*, from *The Cock and the Fox* to *Lucy Gray*. This vast domain is not easily broken up into distinct sections, however easy it may seem to distinguish such examples as these. It is most conveniently regarded as a number of branches ramifying from a single nucleus or core, and retaining its qualities with decreasing purity and distinctness as the branches grow more distant from the centre. The Tale, in its purest form, is *told*, but the telling is after the same fashion as the talk of Shakespeare's men and women; it is illusive but not real; absolutely true in tone and spirit, but not affecting to be a reproduction of the language actually used by men. Whatever impairs the apparent appeal to a circle of absorbed listeners, detracts from the pure quality of the Tale; whatever implies an extraneous interest in poet or hearer, detracts from it. A satiric tale like *Absalom and Achitophel*, or Menenius' Fable of the Belly and the Members, an allegory like the *Faery Queen*, are less pure forms of the Tale than simple narratives. The literary epics, great and small, with their traditional machinery and their traditional pomp of style, are habitually rather written than told. If the poet in his vehemence falls to de-



In the extant literature of the Anglo-Saxons these Germanic qualities rarely find full or energetic expression. Of the heroic stories which formed a part of their common Germanic heritage almost nothing remains. That the grandest of all Germanic story cycles—that of the Sigurd-Siegfried and the Niebelungen—was ever chanted by an Anglo-Saxon bard at all, we know only from the passing mention, in *Beowulf*, of a lay of 'Sigemund' the dragon-slayer, and from a fragment of a 'Waldere'. Christianity, so ardently embraced in England, probably assisted this obliteration of pagan memories. It also contributed, we can hardly doubt, to relax the sinewy strength of Germanic character and to put refined sentiment and elegiac pathos in the place of rugged passion. It substituted for the vague moral *chiaroscuro* of heathendom the sharply-contrasted lights and shadows natural to a world where all events are incidents in the warfare of God and devil. Lessing long afterwards asked whether such a thing as 'Christian tragedy' were possible at all. In any case the effect of an unreflecting Christian enthusiasm was, as the effect of every other apparently complete solution of the riddle of the world must be, to cut away the psychological ground of the kinds of imagination which fasten upon situations of moral complexity and contradiction. For Aristotle the moral issue in tragedy is necessarily complex; both parties in the conflict, he lays down, are in their measure 'good'. Christianity, however theoretically in accord with this temper, imposed quite another upon the literature which it inspired.



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laughter and disport", says the messenger who relates the passing of Beowulf.<sup>1</sup> Here, too, the Christian temper introduced an alien, graver note. There is already a foretaste of Puritanism in the scornful phrases which describe the loud riot of Holofernes' feast. Yet in the courts of fanatical ascetics like King Sigebert of East Anglia or Ceadwalla of Wessex, laughter can hardly have enjoyed more favour than in the heaven of *Faust*. Of the *scurra* or jester, who enlivened the contemporary courts of the Franks, there is no trace; and the riddles, which an Anglo-Saxon poet provided for use at feasts, are probably the most solemn form of post-prandial entertainment known. If anything marks decisively the aloofness of the Anglo-Saxon from the literature of wit and humour, it is the deliberate effacement of these qualities in those numerous riddles founded upon the Latin of Symposius or Aldhelm. What in Latin is terse and epigrammatic, the English poet overlays, diffuses, adorns, sentimentalizes; whatever is pointed he wraps in a loose sheath of embroidered indecisive phrase.

For his serious, diffuse, sentimental story-matter the Anglo-Saxon had a perfectly responsive literary form. The alliterative verse which all the Germanic tribes inherited in common, took the mould of the special qualities of each. In the North it became brief, energetic, rugged, abrupt, like the hammer-strokes of Thor. In England it bore the stamp of a gentler temper and a less iron will; it has more variety, fluctuation, and

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self-indulgence. The Norseman told his tale in stanzas, the Englishman in continuous verse; but though the stanza is usually an impediment to continuity in narrative, the Norse tale is habitually straightforward, simple, direct; while the English tale advances in curves and undulations, deflecting, oscillating, returning on itself, as if in a perpetual effort to find expression for matter which continually eludes it. When the poet of the *Exodus* has to describe the crossing of the Red Sea, he keeps the two elements of the situation—the passing of Israel and the baffled power of the sea—before us by an incessant oscillation from one to the other:

“At these words the whole host arose, the multitude of brave men;—the sea was still. The warriors raised glancing shields and trophies on the sand. The sea wall uprose, and stood erect before the Israelites for a day’s space. The hosts of warriors were resolute; the wall of waves with strong arm kept guard,—they scorned not in heart the Holy One’s bidding.”<sup>1</sup>

Anglo-Saxon story-telling, then, as we know it, is an isolated and detached province of the English tale, limited in range of topic, strongly mannered in speech, and buried in all but complete oblivion for centuries after its day of limited renown. Its direct influence upon the subsequent history of the Tale is thus very slight. Yet the Germanic core of the English people which in all our greatest literature has ultimately made itself apparent through whatever symbolism of classic or romantic art and phrase, found at least inci-

<sup>1</sup> *Exodus*, 299 f. Heinzel, *Stil der Altgerm. Poesie*, p. 12.

dental expression in the Anglo-Saxon tale. The stormy sea-sense of the Elizabethans already pulses in the *Andreas* and the *Seafarer*. Above all, the swinging, accentual rhythm moves to the stress of metrical instincts which have continually reasserted themselves, and are still more vital to-day than they were one, two, or three hundred years ago.

## II

For some three centuries after the Song of Maldon (978) the record of English story remains silent. When it is at length resumed it discloses totally different conditions of story-making. The new *segger* of Henry III and Edward I's time was a homelier, less honoured person than the Anglo-Saxon *scôp*. He had no elaborate traditional art, no poetic speech stored with the phrases and formulas of generations of older makers, no repertory of ancestral tales as familiar to his hearers as himself, nor an audience composed of the best in the land. His art was in its first beginnings, his speech a rude idiom struggling to clothe itself in the alien charm of measure and rhyme, his repertory of tales a marvellous collection of legend and romance from all parts of the known world, caught at second-hand from the eloquence of Norman lips and Norman pens. Thirteenth-century France was not only the emporium of story matter for all the nations of Western Europe, but their mistress in the arts of telling. What it taught, for better or worse, may be summed up in three points:—



First, the *romantic* tale, in which the ground of national or folk-tradition and common experience is definitely abandoned, and the delight in the marvellous and the unknown, in preternatural exploits and fantastic adventures, has full scope. A clerical counterpart of the secular romance, far older indeed, but pursued with peculiar zest and fertility in the romantic age, was the *saint's legend*.

Secondly, in equally sharp antithesis to the fantastic romance and to the 'epic' of national tradition is the humorous satirical tale of modern life, conveyed either directly or through fable. This may be called generally the *fabliau* type. Between the Romance and the *fabliau* stands the *lai*, attaching itself to the latter by its frequent modernity and realism, to the former by the fantastic element which commonly survives from the Breton songs to which the *lais* ascribe their origin.

Thirdly, a narrative *manner*, lacking the highest distinction and the most searching power, but extraordinarily facile, vivacious, and alert.

The romantic and humorous-realistic types of story fell into further varieties, distinguished by their *scale*, and also by the class of hearer for whom they were intended, and by whose support they thrive.

The castle hall and the ladies' bower favoured the romance of fantastic adventure, of legendary heroism, of impossible fidelity; the tavern and market-place preferred to be tickled by the broad and drastic humour of a *fabliau*, or the keen anti-feudal satire of *Renart the Fox*. Both classes of audience, again, relished two kinds of tale-struct

ture, with a corresponding difference in scale: the long, complicated tale which has its centre of interest in the personality of the hero; and the simple, short story, or *novella*, which is concerned primarily with a single incident. If the courts listened to the romances of Arthur or the Graal, of Roland or William of Orange, poured forth in his 'handfuls of fair French' by Chrestien de Troyes and his school, so the market-place had the thirty thousand verses of Renart, with its countless continuations and 'counterfeits'. And, on the other hand, if the market-place had the versified jests and anecdotes of the *fabliau*, the castle had the equally simple and 'indivisible *lai*'.

A brilliant device, which saved the unity of the short story while attaining also the rich complexity of the romance, came from the East. This was the *story-framework*. An Indian sage instructing his pupil by a tale which at every point gives occasion for other tales in illustration or enforcement; an Indian trial, where the prospects of the two litigants are alternately promoted and retarded by the pointed tales they tell;—these are the motives of the two most famous story-complexes of the early middle ages—the *Disciplina Clericalis* and the *Seven Wise Masters*. The didactic aim declined, the point became dramatic instead of doctrinaire; but had there been no *Seven Wise Masters* there would have been no *Decameron* and no *Canterbury Tales*.

Among these various classes of tale, the romances contained some of the finest story-material in the world. There is the stuff of an 'Œdipus Tyrannus'

in the tales of Gregorius and of Degare, who after long wanderings encounter and unwittingly wed their mothers. There is the germ of an 'Odyssey' in the romance of *Guy of Warwick*, who returns a pilgrim from the Holy Land, and after showing himself the greatest warrior of his nation, in battle with the giant Colbrand, enters his own hall, in his pilgrim's garb, and looks, unrecognized, upon his wife as she sits at work like Penelope among her maids. There is a fainter suggestion of the love of Achilles and Patroclus in the pathetic story of Amis and Amiloun. But on the whole, the greater possibilities of story were ignored by all but the best of the romancers. They had no grasp of human nature, no sense consequently of the stress and contradiction from which tragedy springs; by 'tragedy' the whole medieval world understood, characteristically enough, a simple decline from good to evil hap; and when a tragic *nodus* apparently confronted them they habitually chose either to dissolve it in sentiment or to cut it by force. The hero is never brought to the point at which he utters the agonized cry of Ædipus or Lear in their last straits. All obstacles and perils give way before him. If he is exposed as an infant, tender wolves or lions bring him up; if imprisoned, merciful jailers let him out; if condemned to death by paynims, a Sultan's daughter loves and helps him, or the Sultan himself is smitten with pity as he stands at the stake, and not only releases him but troops to the altar with all his house. Even when the hero undergoes real and grievous affliction, like Amis and Amiloun, or Griselda, the poignancy of tragedy is somehow

warded off; the calamity does not rightly come home; the tragic cry is dissolved in a saintly ardour of suffering.

Englishmen have rarely been apt translators; and of the English rhymers and *seggers* who busied themselves in decocting the abundant stores of French romance, few succeeded in conveying into their homely vernacular much of the romantic spirit. To the mystic imagination of Brittany, but half-intelligible to the accomplished French *trouvères* themselves, they were quite impervious; though they fully appreciated its market value as a source of extravagant incident. The wonder-castle of the Graal, the magic potion which effaces all things on earth for Tristan and Isolde but their love, become telling curiosities, like the marvels of the Castle of Otranto.

Of far more promise for the future of English story was the fresh and vigorous *realism*, for which the English purveyors of entertainment seized every opportunity. Their imaginary warfare lacks the virtue of imagination, but they can sometimes suggest the hurtling of real battle when they only try to tell what they have seen. They are more familiar with camp than with court, with the serving men's quarters than with the lady's bower; and the story will become vivid and genial in their hands as it quits the *terrain* accessible only to their ineffective fancy and descends to the familiar resort of their five senses and homely mother-wit. To men of this temper the piquant stories of everyday society which had obtained so prodigious a vogue among the French populace were naturally con-

genial. The *fabliaux*, with their keen satiric point and their unrestrained license, touched the vein of many a rough Englishman who altogether lacked the power of emulating their facility and sparkle. Few of these imitations survive; but by the end of the thirteenth century the country abounded in tales of cognate character, as we may judge from the decree, of 1292, in which the University of Oxford condemned the multitude of *fabulæ* dealing with license and tending to immorality. Some of these stories have won their literary apotheosis in the *Canterbury Tales*; others, like *Dame Siriz* and *A Pennyworth of Wit*, still extant in their original form, serve to illustrate the kind of materia' which Chaucer found before him. *Dame Siriz* is : tale of the Theodore and Honoria type transference to low life. The Dame, a professional go-between, *frightens* a merchant's wife into accepting the advances of a clerical suitor by the device of putting pepper into the eyes of a little dog and explaining that the weeping animal is her daughter—bewitched for similar obstinacy. There is a finer point in the story of another merchant who, irresolute between his wife and his mistress, receives as 'a pennyworth of wit' the counsel to try their fidelity by presenting himself before each in turn as a penniless fugitive. But the English *fabliau* is seen at its best where the humour plays under some frankly fictitious disguise, as in the admirable story of the *Fox and the Wolf*. It is hard to explain why the great continental Beast-epic of the Fox remained so strange to English literature before Caxton, for almost all English poets who have made animals talk have

made them talk well. The *genre* has always, in European literature, hovered between two types—the poem of animal nature, and the fable pure and simple in which the animal speakers are a mere disguise for men. The first is more Germanic, the other Latin and French; the one appeals to the Naturalism of the English mind, the other to its delight in allegory.

The *Cock and the Fox* comes, in easy vivacity, within reasonable distance of the *Parlement of Fowls* and the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, and shows how tolerable an instrument of narrative colloquial English had become, a generation before Chaucer began to write. Here is a specimen of the dialogue, slightly paraphrased. The Wolf coming up to the well, hears the Fox at the bottom:—

“Quoth the Fox: ‘Who is now there?  
I wene it is Isegrim that I hear.’  
‘That is sooth,’ the Wolf sede,  
‘But what art thou, so God thee rede?’  
‘Ah,’ quoth the Fox, ‘I will thee tell,—  
I am Renard, thy friend,  
And if I thy coming had ween’d,  
I had so prayed for thee  
That thou should’st have come to me.’  
‘To thee?’ quoth the Wolf, ‘whereto?  
What should I in the well-pit do?’  
Quoth the Fox: ‘Thou art unwise;  
Here is the bliss of Paradise;  
Here evermore I may well fare,  
Withouten pain, withouten care;  
Here is meat, and here is drink,  
Here is bliss withouten swink,  
Here is hunger never mo  
Nor any other kind of woe;

Of all good things here is enough'.  
At these words the Wolf laughed.  
'Art thou dead, so God thee rede,  
Or of the world?' the Wolf said."

### III

Such were, briefly, the modes of story current in England when the greatest of all English story-tellers began to write. Chaucer reached his final mastery through a somewhat prolonged apprenticeship. Of the recognized story-types there is none which he did not touch, and none which his touch did not adorn; but they were not all equally adapted to the purpose of artistic story-telling, and made demands not satisfied with equal facility, or in an equal degree, upon Chaucer's manipulating art. Infinitely versatile in range of topics and of motives, rejecting neither high nor low, chivalrous adventure nor modern street-jest, pious legend nor joyous fable, the Chaucerian tale had yet to satisfy two canons: it had to have definite unity of structure and harmony of form; and it had to be put into terms of universal human nature, to be made alive and arresting to every human hearer with open eyes and ears. In humanity under every guise he takes a keen and genial delight and just because of his humanism he will not tolerate the shapelessness which comes of matter getting the better of spirit, nor the abstraction and pedantries which come of the tool getting the better of the hand.

To such canons as these the *romances* w among current forms of story, peculiarly

noxious. The typical romance was shapeless, its humanity thin and vague; and Chaucer's positive mind did not provide the kind of alchemy which later turned its very tenuity of substance into material for the brilliant phantasmagoria of Ariosto and the solemn Faerie of Spenser. He had not the ethical intensity of his contemporary, the nameless Gawain-poet, who, like Spenser, brings the marvellous adventures of his hero into subtle relation with his character,—the paragon of knighthood who shudders a little at death. His ways of dealing with romance anticipate faintly the ways of other great positive-minded poets who looked back upon romance from the achieved heights of the full Renaissance which he was but beginning to climb: the mighty travesty of Rabelais and Cervantes, the humanized romance of Shakespeare. What Chaucer thought of the romance in his maturity we know from the admirable parody of *Sir Thopas*—a counterpart, as genial as it is merciless, of the chastisement inflicted by Hogarth's irate musician upon the imperturbable street practitioners under his window.

But there was a strain in his nature to which romance was congenial, and a period of his life in which he gave it unstinted scope. The sentimental extravagance of romantic love, the pathos of fidelity through the long separations imposed by the romantic prodigality of space and time, appealed to that 'pity', which, as he thrice tells us, 'renneth soon in gentil heart', and which was only qualified and chastened by the criticism of his Gallic wit. In youth he had written (as the



Man of Lawe relates) the pathetic tale of 'Seis and Alcyon', which serves as proem to the kindred pathos of the story of the duchess Blanche. The first literary ambition inspired by his Italian journey was, unless appearances deceive, to clothe in the newly-discovered eloquence and music of Boccaccio the more *outré* pathos of Boccaccio's own Griselda.<sup>1</sup> And 'patient' Griselda is but one of a gracious but somewhat anæmic sisterhood of saintly martyrs,—Constance the enduring, Virginia and Cecily the chaste.<sup>2</sup> The exquisite figure of Constance alone, apart from the charm of language, lifts the *Man of Lawe's Tale* above the better romances; structurally it is as well qualified as Sir Thopas itself to serve as their parody. But after Chaucer had entered the forties (*i.e.* from 1380 or thereabouts onward) this vein of sentiment began to run thin. When called upon by the queen to tell the stories of a series of 'Good Women', he assents with charming *entrain*; but he has not gone far before the legend of 'Cupid's Saints' palls upon their quondam votary, notwithstanding that he has dared to impress into his service such 'saints' as Medea and Cleopatra; and presently he has flung away from this cloistered and ascetic virtue to the world of secular humanity, and is telling, with infinite zest, of doughty English wives and frank English maidens,—of the wife of Bath and dame Alison, of May and Dorigen, 'fresh Canace' and 'Emelie

<sup>1</sup> Chaucer, as is well known, used Petrarch's Latin version of the tale

<sup>2</sup> The Tales of the Man of Lawe, the Physician, and the Second Nun were all clearly composed long before Chaucer had planned the *Canterbury Tales*, in which they were finally incorporated.

the bright', or adding a gay ironic *envoy* to the tale of the saintly Griselda:

"Grisilde is deed, and eek hir pacience,  
And bothe atones buried in Itaille;  
For which I crye in open audience,  
No wedded man so hardy be tassaille  
His wyves pacience, in hope to finde  
Grisildes, for in certain he shall faille!"

The splendid *Knight's Tale*, whose course the bright Emelie controls, shows what Chaucer, at the height of his artistic maturity, cared to make of a thoroughly romantic story. It is true that he took the subject from no ordinary romance, but from a quasi-epic full of classical pretensions; but Boccaccio had read Virgil and Statius with romantic eyes, and his epic machinery and episodes only provided new varieties of romantic prolixity and irrelevance. Chaucer, far more naïve, and quite innocent of the lofty ambitions of Humanism, is more classic in spirit than Boccaccio; the *Knight's Tale* is some degrees more Homeric than the *Teseide*. The romantic in it is at once ennobled and restricted; love is more potent and more passionate; but it appears, like the love of Paris and Helen, an incident in a world not as a whole given to sentiment, but ready to allow, with the bland middle-aged cynicism of a Theseus or a Pandarus, that

"A man mot ben a fool or yong or old".

And just as he does not curb romantic sentiment, but gives it at once a higher value and a truer proportion, so he is not afraid of romantic

marvel, provided he can bring it somehow to terms with human nature. The gods debate and wrangle over the fate of Emily, as of old over that of Troy, and Chaucer paints them with humorous gusto, as he might have done some company of jovial and somewhat disreputable nobles. In several other tales he takes over mythical or faery matter with equally naïve relish, from native saint's legend, Breton *lai*, or oriental fable, but with a subtle adaptation to the temper and quality of the narrator. No touch of criticism mars the devout Prioress's tender legend of the slain child's miraculous song; the epicurean Franklin is honestly indignant with the magician who spreads the dead by illusion before the eyes of Dorigen, but does not doubt the power of his art; the gross-bodied wife of Bath, though well aware that *now no man can see elves mo*, tells her tale of Arthurian faery with complete good faith; while the young, poetic Squier, 'as fresh as is the month of May', whose half-told tale is in romantic beauty the finest of all, achieves, like Coleridge in the *Ancient Mariner*, the feat of giving illusive reality to his marvels by imaginative insight into the kind of mental experience which they would create if they happened indeed. The homely folks crowding open-mouthed about the brazer steed, and noting its points with the horsey accomplishment of an English mob; Canace in her girlish joy dreaming of her mirror, going out in the woods at dawn to try the virtue of her ri upon the 'leden' of the singing birds, and listening rapt to the piteous tale of the bleec

falcon,—all this wealth of human realism serves, not to attenuate romance, but to give it its full value.

Nevertheless, it is perhaps in his tales of frank and joyous humour, where romance is ignored or even flouted, that Chaucer's mastery is most consummate. Spenser and Shakespeare touched romance to finer issues; but the literature of the *fabliau* culminates in the tales of the Miller of Trumpington (the *Reeve's*), the Cock and the Fox (the *Nun's Priest's*), and in the grimmer jest of the Three Rioters who seek for Death (the *Pardoner's*). Chaucer's humour was more potent and prevailing than his pathos; he had felt the *lacrymæ rerum*, but the mood of tragic despondence or foreboding was rather poignant with him than prolonged; after telling a 'tragedy' he passed gladly, as at the close of *Troilus*, to the relief of a quasi-'comic' *House of Fame*. This side of Chaucer is reflected in the admirable connecting story of the *Canterbury Tales*, and embodied in the person of Harry Bailie, who sets it going and determines its course. Like Pandarus and Theseus, he keeps romance in check while allowing it to have its fling; does due honour to the noble tale of Palamon, but will not away with Sir Thopas; roundly echoes the Knight's protest against the Monk's 'tragedies' of ruined princes, and expresses his mind in his counsel to the Nun's Priest: '*Look, let thy mind be murie evermo!*' The hearty positive genius of the English people keeps watch, throughout this final masterpiece of Chaucer, upon the irresponsible literary and poetic instincts of rhetoric,

sentiment, romance, which in later days have habitually scorned its control. It is Chaucer's magical achievement as a story-teller to have reconciled the two without doing violence to either.

#### IV

But Chaucer's magic died with him. The ensuing century not only found no comparable artis attempting his work; it introduced conditions which made it harder to achieve, and placed heavier burdens upon weaker shoulders. As usual, it was not the most studious imitators who came nearest. Henryson, who deals out doom to Chaucer's faithless Cresseide, and makes her kneel by the wayside, a leper, unrecognized, to beg alms of her old lover, is more Chaucerian than Lydgate with his 'new Canterbury Tale' of Thebes. Henryson, the schoolmaster of Dunfermline, is not quite without the foibles of his craft; and the Humanist movement, which gave the schoolmaster an unprecedented importance in the making of literature, tended on the whole to accumulate obstacles to the recovery of Chaucer's art, or the attainment of any art so classic in noble simplicity as his. It was too favourable to rhetoric not to be perilous to story. Nothing is more remarkable in Chaucer than the naive unconcern with which he goes by the rhetorical allurements of the Roman poetry which he reverts for its story's sake; both those which belonged to a great poetic manner beyond his reach, and those which marked a perilous excess of mere intellectual vivacity over imaginative power. If he did

and could not acquire the noble style of Virgil or of Dante, he seems to have at least suffered no hurt from the brilliant virtuosity of Ovid. But in the first generation of the sixteenth century the days of this happy nonchalance, or serene self-mastery, were over. Phonetic decay had ruined the beauty of Chaucer's verse; his metric had perished with the inflections on which it was based; English was once more a rude tongue, utterly worsted in a comparison, which Chaucer could have stood, with the efficiency, lucidity, and point of Augustan Latin. The brocaded ceremonial stateliness of Latin style was inevitably alluring to the speakers of a homely idiom, and beguiled them to emulate an eloquence habitually tending to declamation, and formal beauties which rather decorate and diversify a narrative than arise spontaneously in its course. In the mind of a Dante or a Milton the language of Virgil may beget a narrative style of incomparable poetic weight and power, but it is a dangerous school of story for smaller men.

And while the language was rapidly annexing stylistic elements not directly favourable to story, the animating spirit of literature was also passing yet more swiftly out of the mood of quiescent reminiscence in which story thrives. It was an age of discovery and innovation, of enlarging horizons and beckoning dreams. The temper of the Elizabethan Renaissance was lyrical, passionate, individual; all their greatest poetry and their greatest prose, whatever its form, is lyrical in mood; we hear through its complex harmonies

a ground-tone of heroic song energy threw itself into the utter, to the neglect of those who scribe. Story could not hold it and drama; the glass held up to over the secondary portraiture pigments of words. The Tale, Chaucer, with its marvellous humour and sentiment, of realism of churl and gentle, has passed to a new and resumed existence trans arrayed. The story-form has lost its pliability; it can no longer hold so much nor attach so various an audience. Poetry go their several ways; chivalry follow their separate resorts. The *Reve* will be found among the fishwife's gate, listening to the racy tales of the waterman as he rows them home,<sup>1</sup> or ribald stories with the 'Cobbler of' and the 'Tinker of Turvey'; the Knight and Squier have joined the courtly circle with to the *Faerie Queene*; while Harry Bail both, has found his place among the spectators of the Globe, laughing and swearing at the *Falstaff*, and cheering equally the heroic gaiety of Prince Hal.

Spenser made his début as an enthusiastic disciple of Chaucer, and fell at first to tell like the 'Oak and the Briar' in the

<sup>1</sup>This is the scheme of the extant series of tales called *Smelts*, which, with the other collections named, are all in prose of the *Canterbury Tales*.





nain was the world of classic myth, as set forth with hard enamelled brilliance by Ovid. This myth-world was as remote from nature and humanity as Spenser's, and the school of poets who felt its charm were not minded, like Shelley and Keats in after-days, to make it more natural or more human than it was. They rather fastened, with the enthusiasm of pure artists, upon every fantastic or arabesque contortion of incident which offered a coign of vantage for beauty. Like many a romantic poet of later times, like Keats in *Lamia* or Victor Hugo in the *Satyre*, they delighted in representing the 'leaps' which Nature declines to make, the transformations of gods and men in which Ovid had laid up the choicest labour of his 'sweet witty soul'. Some of these traits are exhibited in the mythologic plays of Lyly, and in his *Euphues*, but they are most completely embodied in the *Glaucus and Scilla* of Thomas Lodge. Marlowe and Shakespeare have their roots, as epic poets, in the same neo-pagan school, but both in important points evade its formulas and prophesy of the superb poetic future which it was given to Shakespeare only to achieve.

Lodge was an adept in the graceful ingenuities of style which Lyly, his college contemporary and literary exemplar, had first made current. He delighted in images derived from classic myths, and in the painting or sculpture founded on them. In the chamber of his heroines Diana will be carved in marble, surprised by the sudden intrusion of Actaeon, or Anacreon's Cupids kept in check by 'well-shaped Modesty'; while on the walls "all the

chaste ladies of the world inched out of silver, looking through fair mirrors of chrysolite, carbuncles, sapphires, emeralds, fix their eyes on the picture of Eternity".<sup>1</sup> Sumptuous scenery of this kind is one of Lodge's habitual points of repair, in verse as in prose. It was not a very noble sphere, and the highest claim, after all, of Lodge, as of Lyly, is to have helped to guide the early steps of Shakespeare. For that the manner of the *Venus and Adonis* (1593) owes something to that of the *Glaucus and Scilla* is hardly doubtful. But Shakespeare not only showed himself already a master of all the devices and ingenuities to which Lyly gave vogue; he threw into the somewhat artificial and jaded atmosphere of the classic tale the fragrance of nature, the freshness of a blithe, observant, penetrating spirit, the naïveté of English folk-lore. Shakespeare, like Lodge, derives the method of his tale ultimately from Ovid, but he is far freer and bolder in his use of it. In the famous description of the hare, for instance, a touch as luminous and delicately distinct as Ovid's achieves effects not caught from his enamel and gold, but from the dewy morning meads on Cotswold or by Avon. And already in the *Lucrece* of the next year (1594) his manner is more his own. It is, unmistakably, the 'graver labour' to which, in the dedication of the *Venus and Adonis*, he promised 'to devote all idle hours'. Its deeper tones denote, not certainly any revolt or recantation, but yet a resolve to give his work a fuller consonance with his nature, to make it utter the richer harmonies of his music as

<sup>1</sup> *A Margarine of America*. Warton, *Hist. of E. P.* 17. 342.

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Leander into one another's arms; seeing that, as his famous phrases have it,—

“It lies not in our power to love or hate,  
For love in us is overruled by fate. . . .  
Where both deliberate, the love is slight;  
Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?”

Marlowe's death left his work a fragment; and Chapman's continuation—two-thirds of the entire work—abounds with all the ingenuities of rhetorical device, of which the most learned of Elizabethan poets had so ample a store.

## V

In their most pagan mood, however, the Elizabethans remained singularly free from the more deadly weaknesses of neo-classicism. Their hardy originality asserted itself through their most ardent discipleship to ancient writers; antiquity and its ideals nourished and enriched their minds, but did not master or subdue them. The English Renaissance at no time dreamed, like the Italian, of the actual revival of the pagan world. Compared with the fanatic fervour of Rienzi for his restored Rome, the temper of More's Platonic Utopia is that of a brilliant *jeu d'esprit*, as Elizabethan El Dorados beckoned from beyond far other seas than the Tyrrhene or Aegean. The literatures of the classical world were not the firm and insecure steps such partial authority had attained in our so-called Augustan age, but only in the seventeenth century, when, in mining ideals, the fundamental

and moving tale the weighty and sonorous five-foot quatrain was no doubt a hazardous choice; but Dryden, with his brilliant faculty of saving an apparently hopeless cause, compels us to regard it as, in his case, a happy one. Davenant never really masters the secret of the difficult strophe; it remains with him, despite his lyrical intention, an aggregate of four lines having rhymes in particular places but no totality of effect: Dryden elicits all the spring and resonance of which lines are capable, the verse fairly bounds under his hands, and each strophe has the value of a single complex musical phrase. The *Annus Mirabilis* (1667) is not a great poem, nor indeed strictly a poem at all; Dryden himself did not claim for it a place among the heroic epics, "though both the actions and actors are as much heroic as any poem can contain".<sup>1</sup> It is a brilliant example of a bad kind; the apotheosis of the Chronicle in verse. That Dryden never tried the loftier flight must be reckoned to the credit of his critical sanity and self-knowledge. For one who reckoned epic the supreme form of literature, as he did, the literary *ignis fatuus* of the modern epic must have had a dangerous attraction. But his shrewdness doubtless drew a warning from the virtual failure of Cowley and Davenant, and perhaps not less from the amazing triumph of Milton. No one better understood than Dryden himself, when he asked leave to turn *Paradise Lost* into rhyme, the difference in fundamental inspiration between himself and the master

<sup>1</sup> Dryden. Preface to *Annus Mirabilis*.





refused his hand;<sup>1</sup> old Tancred savagely sending his daughter her lover's heart,<sup>2</sup>—these fine audacities of medieval legend fanned anew the old heroic fire, and threw out a last challenge to his well-tryed skill. It is hardly an accident that he has uniformly avoided the tales which make no demand upon credulity, and offer no problem to the master of persuasive speech. Dryden belonged to a generation for which the vision of romance had faded, and the vision of nature was not yet born: but the forensic instinct had never been so keen or the means of gratifying it so highly developed; and that instinct found its opportunity best in a story somewhat audaciously unreal in motive,—a profile of capricious arabesque requiring all an artist's cunning to give meaning and vitality to its random curves. Such success as this must be conceded to Dryden in these tales. Nowhere is his language more pliant, or his verse more supple.

## VI

Dryden blew the embers of the Tale in Verse, but the momentary glow did not arrest its steady decline. In spite of the brilliance of Pope and the Horatian urbanity of Prior, in spite of the admirable ease of Swift and the geniality of Gay, the verse-tale was, in respect of all higher literary qualities, decrepit, and the power of story-telling confined to narrow limits of topic and mood. The only kind of verse-tale which throve was that in

<sup>1</sup> *Decam.* V., Nov. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Decam.* IV. (Love stories with a tragic ending), Nov. 1.





whole poetic substance, until in the *Parish Register* (1807) and the *Borough* (1810) the nominal topic forms little more than a prosaic integument for the series of lively and moving tales; while in the *Tales in Verse* (1813) and *Tales of the Hall* (1819), the integument itself is finally sloughed off. Nothing could better illustrate the recovery of verse-story which marks the first generation of the nineteenth century, than this change of method and of point of view in a poet otherwise most tenaciously conservative of both, and with no pulse of revolution in his blood.

It is not among the contemplative devotees of a country life that the sources of the recovery of story are to be sought, but in that second line of rebels against the Augustan hegemony (including many recruits from the first) who in the seventh decade of the eighteenth century began to get the upper hand in English letters. The Revival of Romance had, in regard to the intrinsic character of the poetry to which it opened a way, many affinities with the 'Return to Nature'; but its way led far more through tale and ballad than through any more abstract or contemplative form of verse. Milton and Spenser were beacon-lights to both; but the Landscapists looked rather to *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, the Romantics to the *Fairie Queene*. Thomson's *Seasons* is dominated by Milton; the *Castle of Indolence* by Spenser. Gray passed from the personal ode and elegy to render for the first time in English verse the heroic myths of the North and West. The decisive turning-point in the history of the movement

was undoubtedly the appearance, in 1765, of Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry*. Whether that amiable prelate had himself heard the horns of elf-land blowing may be doubtful; certainly he was capable of taking the dulcet warble of some neighbouring clergyman for an excellent echo of their note. But he put others with better ears in the way of hearing them. His collection is a strange farrago of good and bad, old and new; but of the old and the good there was enough, and the new and bad perished of its own inanity. The most fruitful part of the bequest was no doubt the ballads, after them the romances. The German poet Burger caught fire from the ballads of the *Reliques*, and his *Lenore* quickened the lyrical fervour in many an English brain. "Have you seen the translation of Burger's *Lenore* in the Monthly Magazine?" wrote Lamb to Coleridge. "If you have!!!!" All the seething literary energies of the declining century sought expression for a time through the channel of this simple and primitive form of verse, not always without some violence to their natural bent and scope.

Wordsworth and Coleridge, poets of the brooding eye and the visionary dream, made their first serious appeal to the world through a form consecrated to adventure and exploit. Scott, too, who only found full scope for the entire range of his imagination in the prose novel, gave the first inadequate hint of his powers in ballads of very unequal merit. All three, after 'blowing through brass' strains of a somewhat insecure and casual magnificence, passed on to 'breathe

through silver' a music more perfectly expressive of their nature. None of the Lyrical Ballads is so Wordsworthian as the *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*; the *Ancient Mariner* itself, though perhaps a greater poem than the *Christabel*, is less saturated with the quality of Coleridge's mind; and *Glenfinlas* and the  *Eve of St. John* are clearly transcended by *Marmion* and the *Lady of the Lake*. Wordsworth, the least epic-ally gifted of the three, thus fell for the time out of the ranks of the lyrical tellers of tales; while Coleridge and Scott evolved a new, rich, and beautiful form of the Tale in Verse. Scott, as is well known, with his usual generosity, declared that he owed the suggestion of the metre of the *Lay* to *Christabel*, which he had heard recited by Stoddart. To us the tales of the two poets belong to two widely different types. In delicacy and richness of music, in sense of mystery, *Christabel* is unrelated to any part of Scott's work. But he discovered a host of new effects in compensation for those which his ear was too gross to catch; he transported the dainty metre from Coleridge's mystic faeryland, and set it to the tune of trumpet and harp, the clank of spurs, and the canter of troopers. And while Coleridge sang as the shy and lonely poet for fit ears and few, Scott was a true modern minstrel, full of genial and accessible power, easily captivating the hearts of old and young, learned and lewd, a born story-teller such as had not arisen in England since Dryden, or even since Chaucer. His only rival, until his younger contemporary Byron gaily filched his

crown, was the older contemporary whose tales, entirely untouched by his manner, were to be the delight of his maturity and the solace of his death-bed, and whom Byron called 'Nature's sternest painter and the best'. At the present day the lustre of Scott's and Byron's tales is more tarnished than that of Crabbe's. The pageants of romance and of romantic history grow dim; the tragedy of everyday life always finds an echo and never loses its hold. Yet Crabbe is no mere transcriber. His world, as Tennyson said, is his own. "There is a 'tramp, tramp, tramp', a merciless sledge-hammer thud about his lines which suits his subjects."<sup>1</sup> Byron appealed even more than Scott to the zest of the strange and the marvellous,—a kind of attraction which serves better to make men famous than to keep them so. The flagging interest of the public in metrical tales instantly revived when the hackneyed romance of border chivalry was replaced by the melodrama of oriental crime, and Scott's flowing but often featureless verse by Byron's unfailing resonance and glitter. Something of the old contrast between epic and romance was resumed in these two. Scott's tales, with whatever embroidery of romantic fancy, are yet living abstracts of national life, with more of Homer than of Ariosto, to whom Byron, in his mood of splendid but wilful compliment, compared his old rival. For Byron, his hero fills the whole field and absorbs the whole interest, like Sir Guy or Sir Bevis in the old romances. Marmion's death is a singl

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Tennyson* (1 vol ed.), p. 650.





derness, triumph over this obstacle; the verse is hard and inflexible as marble, but it breathes and burns. He renders the hurly-burly of battle not, like Scott, by a sympathetic rush and tumult of style, but like a sculptor, by an intense and passion-fraught repose. Arnold, his most direct successor among the poets of the mid-century, surpassed Landor's finest epic work in a few passages of his narrative poems, as in the famous close of *Sohrab and Rustum*; but his less massive build of mind does not so uniformly support and ennoble the austere form which he uses.

In the meantime the day of the great old English master of the Tale in Verse was at length to return. Chaucer, though never without reputation, had not touched the deeper poetic instincts of the first generation of nineteenth-century poets. His blithe realism was foreign to the romantic temper, his medieval scenery and ideas obscured his inner affinity, as an artist, to the Greeks. The slow advance of English philology made it possible to regard him as a rude pioneer in verse whose other merits entitled him to indulgence for his halting lines. Even Leigh Hunt, the first to emulate him as a story-teller, went to school with Dryden for his narrative verse, and long afterwards, while owning Chaucer to be the greatest of English narrative poets 'even in versification', added the curious apologetic qualification—"if the unsettled state of the language in his time, and the want of all native precursors in the art, be considered". Yet Hunt was the first who seriously set himself to tell a tale in Chaucer's manner,





Clough's work is controlled by no prevailing sense of beauty, like Goethe's; he has moments of greatness, and may perhaps still claim to have written three or four of the finest English hexameters; but it is almost as certain that he has to answer for a hundred or more of the worst. In the closing year of his life Clough applied the frank modernity of tone and topic which he had learnt from Goethe to the dramatic scheme of Chaucer. The *Mari Magno* is founded upon a pilgrimage of to-day,—the deck of an Atlantic liner for the Canterbury highway, and the great Republic, big with the destinies of the future, for the gray old medieval shrine. The enforced leisure of a voyage makes the high seas a natural framework for tales. Three centuries before Clough, Cinthio had made the tellers of his *Hecatommithi* fugitives on shipboard from the sack of Rome. So the Elizabethan *Westward for Smelts* already mentioned. But the pilgrims are very slightly drawn. Clough is interested in his speakers only as types of different ways of regarding the particular social problem which all their stories illustrate. In William Morris the dramatic element recedes still further, and the modernity is deliberately repudiated. If Clough threw the pale cast of modern intellectualism upon the rich humanity of the Chaucerian tale, Morris sequestered it in the vague lustrous twilight of legendary romance, and attached his tales to the slow-changing seasons of the primeval year. The two most considerable modern imitators of Chaucer represent the extremest divergence of which the modern



manner, and to diminish in proportion the prestige of the most notable epic achievement of the previous generation,—the *Idylls of the King*. His superb but fundamentally lyrical *Balan and Balcn*, compared with the Idyll on the same story, marks the change of mood and *tempo*. If the poetry of thought, penetration, analysis, has yielded ground at one point to the poetry of action and adventure, so it has at another to the poetry of the dream. The lovely visions of Mr. Yeats are full of the elements of story,—wandering filaments of romance blown like impalpable gossamers in our faces, but rarely putting on the semblance of either coherent action or sustained thought. With a profusion of beautiful and stirring song, our poetry lacks at present the qualities which make poetic story great, representative, and finally memorable. No contemporary poem has even such claim as the *Idylls of the King* had to be a national epic, to enshrine the soul of England,—as Mr. Kipling's ballads may be said to enshrine her imperial 'limbs and outward flourishes'. The picturesque multiplicity of our verse represents all the changing phases of concrete life; but even from the superb genius of Mr. Swinburne we do not dream of listening for those final 'criticisms of life',—those last words of visionary contemplation which the stir and movement of the greatest Tales in Verse implicitly involve;—that prophetic strain of old experience which came from Sophocles among the olives of Colonus, from Shakespeare by his recovered Avon, from Milton in the poor chamber that hardly fenced off the alien roar of Restoration London.



# ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

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GEOFFREY CHAUCER

(C. 1340-1400)

## I. THE SQUIRE'S TALE

*Here bigynneth the Squieres Tale*

AT Sarray, in the land of Tartarye,  
Ther dwelte a kyng that werreyed Russye,  
Thurgh which ther dyde many a doughty man.  
This noble kyng was cleped Cambyuskan,  
Which in his tyme was of so greet renoun  
That ther was nowher in no regioun  
So excellent a lord in allé thyng.  
Hym lakked noght that longeth to a kyng;  
As of the secte of which that he was born,  
He kepte his lay, to which that he was sworn;  
And therto he was hardy, wys, and riche,  
Pitous and just, and evermore yliche;  
Sooth of his word, benigne and honourable,  
Of his corage as any centre stable;  
Yong, fressh, and strong, in armés desirous  
As any bachelor of al his hous.  
A fair persone he was, and fortunat,  
And kepte alwey so wel roial estat  
That ther was nowher swich another man.

This noble kyng, this Tartre Cambyuskan,  
Haddé two sones on Elpheta his wyf,

Of whiché the eldeste highté Algarsyf;  
 That oother sone was clepéd Cambalo.  
 A doghter hadde this worthy kyng also  
 That yongest was, and highté Canacee,  
 But for to tellé yow all hir beautee  
 It lyth nat in my tonge, nyn<sup>1</sup> my konnyng;  
 I dar nat undertake so heigh a thyng;  
 Myn Englissh eek is insufficient;  
 It mosté been a rethor excellent,  
 That koude his colours longynge for that art,  
 If he sholde hire discryven every part;  
 I am noon swich, I moot speke as I kan.

And so bifel that whan this Cambyuskan  
 Hath twenty wynter born his diademe,  
 As he was wont fro yeer to yeer, I deme,  
 He leet the feeste of his nativitee  
 Doon cryen thurghout Sarray his citee,  
 The last Idus of March after the yeer.

Phebus, the sonne, ful joly was and clec  
 For he was neigh his exaltacioun  
 In Martés face, and in his mansioun  
 In Aries, the colerik hooté signe.  
 Ful lusty was the weder and benigne,  
 For which the foweles agayn the sonnè sheene,  
 What for the sesoun and the yongé grene,  
 Ful loudé songen hire affeccions,  
 Hem semed han geten hem protecciouns  
 Agayn the swerd of wynter, keene and coold.

This Cambyuskan—of which I have yow toold—  
 In roial vestiment sit<sup>2</sup> on his deys,  
 With diademe, ful heighe in his paleys,  
 And halt his feeste so solempne and so ryche,  
 That in this world ne was ther noon it lyche;  
 Of which if I shal tellen al tharray,

<sup>1</sup> *nyn* (*ne in*), nor in.

<sup>2</sup> *sit*, sits.

Thanne wolde it occupie a someres day;  
 And eek it nedeth nat for to devyse  
 At every cours the ordre of hire servyse.  
 I wol nat tellen of hir strangè sewes,  
 Ne of hir swannes, ne of hire heronsewes<sup>1</sup>.  
 Eek in that lond, as tellen knyghtès olde,  
 Ther is som mete that is ful deynté holde  
 That in this lond men recche of it but smal;  
 Ther nys no man that may reporten al.

I wol nat taryen yow, for it is pryme<sup>2</sup>,  
 And for it is no fruyt, but los of tyme;  
 Unto my firste I wole have my recours.

And so bifel that after the thridde cours,  
 Whil that this kyng sit thus in his nobleye,  
 Herknyng his mynstralès hîr thyngès pleye  
 Biforn hym at the bord deliciously,  
 In at the hallè dore, al sodeynly,  
 Ther cam a knyght upon a steede of bras,  
 And in his hand a brood mirour of glas;  
 Upon his thombe he hadde of gold a ring,  
 And by his syde a naked swerd hangyng;  
 And up he rideth to the heighè bord.  
 In al the halle ne was ther spoken a word,  
 For merveille of this knyght; hym to biholde  
 Ful bisily ther wayten yonge and olde.

This strangè knyght that cam thus sodeynly,  
 Al arméd, save his heed, ful richély,  
 Saleweth kyng and queene, and lordès alle,  
 By ordre, as they seten in the halle,  
 With so heigh reverence and obeisaunce,  
 As wel in spechè as in contenaunce,  
 That Gawayn, with his oldé curteisye,  
 Though he were comen ageyn out of fairye,  
 Ne koude hym nat amendé with a word;

<sup>1</sup> *heronsewes*, herons.

<sup>2</sup> *pryme*, 9 a.m.





"This mirroure eek, that I have in myn hond,  
 Hath swich a myght that men may in it see  
 Whan ther shal fallen any adversitee  
 Unto youre regne, or to yourself also,  
 And openly who is youre freend or foo;  
 And over al this, if any lady bright  
 Hath set hire herte on any maner wight,  
 If he be fals she shal his tresoun see,  
 His newè love, and al his subtiltee,  
 So openly that ther shal no thyng hyde.  
 Wherefore, ageyn this lusty someres tyde,  
 This mirour and this ryng that ye may see  
 He hath sent to my Lady Canacee,  
 Your excellèntè doghter that is heere.

"The vertu of the ryng, if ye wol heere,  
 Is this, that if hire lust<sup>1</sup> it for to were  
 Upon hir thombe, or in hir purs it bere,  
 Ther is no fowel that fleeth under the hevене  
 That she ne shal wel understonde his stevene<sup>2</sup>,  
 And knowe his menyng openly and pleyn,  
 And answeere hym in his langage ageyn;  
 And every gras that groweth upon roote  
 She shall eek knowe, and whom it wol do boote,  
 Al be his woundès never so depe and wyde.

"This naked swerd that hangeth by my syde  
 Swich vertu hath that what man so ye smyte,  
 Thurghout his armure it wol kerve and byte,  
 Were it as thikke as is a branched ook;  
 And what man that is wounded with the strook  
 Shal never be hool, til that yow list of grace  
 To stroke hym with the plat in thilkè place  
 Ther he is hurt; this is as mucche to seyn,  
 Ye mootè with the plattè swerd ageyn  
 Strike hym in the wounde and it wol close.

<sup>1</sup> if hire lust, if she desire.

<sup>2</sup> stevene, voice.

This is a verray sooth, withouten glose,  
It failleth nat whil it is in youre hold."

And whan this knyght hath thus his talé told,  
He rideth out of halle, and doun he lighte.  
His steedé, which that shoon as sonnè brighte,  
Stant in the court as stille as any stoon.  
This knyght is to his chambrè lad anoon,  
And is unarmed and unto mete y-set.

The presentes been ful roially y-fet<sup>1</sup>,—  
This is to seyn, the swerd and the mirour,—  
And born anon into the heighè tour,  
With certeine officers ordeyned therfore;  
And unto Canacee this ryng was bore  
Solempnély, ther she sit at the table;  
But sikerly, withouten any fable,  
The hors of bras, that may nat be remewed,  
It stant as it were to the ground y-glewed;  
Ther may no man out of the place it dryve  
For noon engyn of wyndas ne polyve<sup>2</sup>;  
And causè why? for they kan nat the craft;  
And therfore in the place they han it laft,  
Til that the knyght hath taught hem the mane!  
To voyden hym, as ye shal after heere.

Greet was the prees that swarmeth to and fi  
To gauren on this hors that stondest so;  
For it so heigh was, and so brood and long,  
So wel proporcionéd for to been strong,  
Right as it were a steede of Lumbardye;  
Ther-with so horsly, and so quyk of eye,  
As it a gentil Poulleys<sup>3</sup> courser were;  
For certes, fro his tayl unto his ere,  
Nature ne art ne koude hym nat amende

<sup>1</sup> *y-fet*, fetched, conveyed.

<sup>2</sup> *wyndas ne polyve*, windlass nor pulley.

<sup>3</sup> *Pouilleys*, Apulian.

In no degree, as al the peple wende.  
 But evermoore hir moosté wonder was  
 How that it koudè go, and was of bras!  
 It was of fairye, as al the peple semed.  
 Diversè folk diversèly they demed;  
 As many heddes as many wittes ther been.  
 They murmureden as dooth a swarm of been,  
 And maden skiles after hir fantasies,  
 Rehersynge of thise oldè poetries;  
 And seyden, it was lyk the Pegasee,  
 The hors that haddè wyngès for to flee;  
 Or elles it was the Grekès hors, Synoun,  
 That broghtè Troiè to destruccioun,  
 As men may in thise oldè gestès rede.

"Myn herte", quod oon, "is evermoore in drede;  
 I trow som men of armès been ther-inne,  
 That shapen hem this citee for to wynne;  
 It were right good that al swich thyng were knowe."

Another rownèd to his felawe lowe,  
 And seyde, "He lyeth! it is rather lyk  
 An apparence, y-maad by som magyk;  
 As jogelours pleyen at thise feestès grete".  
 Of sondry doutès thus they jangle and trete,  
 As lewèd peple demeth comunly  
 Of thyngès that been maad moore subtilly  
 Than they kan in hir lewednesse comprehende,  
 They demen gladly to the badder ende.

And somme of hem wondred on the mirour  
 That born was up into the hyè tour,  
 How men myghte in it swichè thyngès se.  
 Another answerde and seyde it myghte wel be  
 Naturelly, by composiciouns  
 Of angles and of slye reflexiouns;  
 And seyden that in Romè was swich oon.  
 They spoken of Alocen and Vitulon,



The gentil Leon, with his Aldiran,  
 Whan that this Tartrê kyng Cambyuskan  
 Roos fro his bord, ther as he sat ful hye.  
 Toform hym gooth the loudè mynstralcyë  
 Til he cam to his chambre of parements;  
 Ther as they sownen diverse instruments  
 That it is lyk an hevene for to heere.  
 Now dauncen lusty Venus<sup>1</sup> children deere,  
 For in the Fyssh hir lady sat ful hye,  
 And looketh on hem with a freendly eye.

This noble kyng is set up in his trone;  
 This strangè knyght is fet to hym ful soone,  
 And on the daunce he gooth with Canacee.  
 Heere is the revel and the jolitee  
 That is nat able a dul man to devyse;  
 He moste han knowen love and his servyse,  
 And been a festlych man, as fressh as May,  
 That sholdè yow devysen swich array.

Who koudè tellè yow the forme of daunces  
 So unkouth, and so fresshé contenaunces,  
 Swich subtil looking and dissymulynge  
 For drede of jalouse mennes aperceyvynge?  
 No man but Launcelot, and he is deed.  
 Therefore I passe of al this lustiheed;  
 I say namoore, but in this jolynesse  
 I lete hem til men to the soper dresse.

The styward byt<sup>2</sup> the spices for to hye,  
 And eek the wyn, in al this melodye.  
 The usshers and the squiers been y-goön,  
 The spices and the wyn is come anon.  
 They ete and drynke, and whan this hadde an ende,  
 Unto the temple, as reson was, they wende.

The service doon they soupen al by day;

<sup>1</sup> The plant Venus being 'exalted', in Piscis, thoughts of love are in the ascendant.

<sup>2</sup> *byt*, orders.



Bitwixé yow and me, and that ful soone.  
Ride whan yow list, ther is namoore to doone."

Enforméd whan the kyng was of that knyght,  
And bath conceyvéd in his wit aright  
The manere and the forme of al this thyng,  
Ful glad and blithe this noble doughty kyng  
Repeireth to his revel as biforn.

The brydel is unto the tour y-born  
And kept among his jueles leere and deere,  
The hors vanysshed, I noot in what manere,  
Out of hir sighte, ye gete namoore of me;  
But thus I lete in lust and jolitee  
This Cambyuskan his lordès festeiynge,  
Til wel ny the day bigan to sprynge.

[PART II]

The norice of digestioun, the sleepe,  
Gan on hem wynke, and bad hem taken keepe  
That muchel drynke and labour wolde han reste;  
And with a galpyng mouth hem alle he keste,  
And seyde, it was tyme to lye adoun,  
For blood was in his domynacioun.  
"Cherisseth blood, natúres freend," quod he.  
They thanken hym galpynge, by two, by thre,  
And every wight gan drawe hym to his reste,  
As sleepe hem bad; they took it for the beste.

Hire dremés shul nat been y-toold for me:  
Ful were hire heddés of fumositee,  
That causeth dreem, of which ther nys no charge  
They slepen til that it was pryme large,  
The moosté part, but it were Canacee.  
She was ful mesurable, as wommen be,  
For of hir fader haddie she take love  
To goon to reste, soone after it was eve





For right anon she wisté what they mente  
Right by hir song, and knew al hir<sup>1</sup> entente.

The knotté why that every tale is toold,  
If it be taried til that lust be coold  
Of hem that han it after herkned yooore,  
The savour passeth ever lenger the moore,  
For fulsomnesse of his prolixitee;  
And by the same resoun thynketh me,  
I sholdé to the knotte condescende  
And maken of hir walkyng soone an ende

Amydde a tree fordrye<sup>2</sup>, as whit as chalk,  
As Canacee was pleyying in hir walk,  
Ther sat a faucon over hire heed ful hye,  
That with a pitous voys so gan to crye  
That all the wode resounded of hire cry.  
Y-beten hath she hir-self so pitously  
With bothe hir wynges til the rede blood  
Ran endelóng the tree ther as she stood,  
And ever in oon she cryde alwey and shrighte,  
And with hir beek hir selven so she prighte,  
That ther nys tygre, ne noon so cruuel beest,  
That dwelleth outhir in wode or in forest,  
That nolde han wept, if that he wepe koude,  
For sorwe of hire, she shrighte alwey so loude.  
For ther nas never yet no man on lyve,  
If that I koude a faucon wel dysryve,  
That herde of swich another of tarmesse,  
As wel of plumage as of gentilnesse  
Of shape, and al that myghte a reke ad be  
A faucon peregryn thanne sende stee  
Of fremde land, and evermore, <sup>that she</sup>  
She swowneth now and now <sup>that she</sup>  
Til wel neigh is she taken to



If that I verrailly the causé knewe  
 Of youre disese, if it lay in my myght,  
 I wolde amenden it er it were nyght,  
 As wisly helpe me greté God of kynde!  
 And herbés shal I right ynowe y-fynde  
 To heclé with youre hurtés hastily."

Tho shrighte this faucon yet moore pitously  
 Than ever she dide, and fil to grounde anon,  
 And lith aswowné, deed, and lyk a stoon,  
 Til Canacee hath in hire lappe hire take  
 Unto the tyme she gan of swough awake;  
 And after that she of hir swough gan breyde<sup>1</sup>  
 Right in hir haukés ledene thus she seyde:  
 "That pitee renneth soone in gentil herte,  
 Feelynge his similitude in peynés smerte,  
 Is prevéd al day, as men may it see,  
 As wel by werk as by auctoritee;  
 For gentil herté kitheth<sup>2</sup> gentillesse.  
 I se wel that ye han of my distresse  
 Compassioun, my fairé Canacee,  
 Of verray wommanly benignytee  
 That nature in youre principles hath set:  
 But for noon hopé for to fare the bet,  
 But for to obeye unto youre herté free,  
 And for to maken othere be war by me,  
 As by the whelpe chasted is the leoun,<sup>3</sup>  
 Right for that cause and that conclusioun.  
 Whil that I have a leyser and a space,  
 Myn harm I wol confessen, er I pace."  
 And ever whil that oon hir sorwe tolde  
 That oother weepe as she to water wolde,  
 Til that the faucon bad hire to be stille,  
 And, with a syk<sup>4</sup>, right thus she seyde hir wille.

<sup>1</sup> *gan bryde*, started up      <sup>2</sup> *kitheth*, shows.

<sup>3</sup> *i.e.* the whelp is chastened as an example to the lion.  
 (111. 22)

"Ther I was bred, allas! that hardè day,—  
 And fostred in a rock of marbul gray  
 So tendrèly that no thyng eylèd me,—  
 I nystè nat what was adversitee  
 Til I koude flee ful hye under the sky—  
 Tho dwelte a tercèlet me fastè by,  
 That semèd welle of allè gentillesse;  
 Al were he ful of tresoun and falsnesse,  
 It was so wrappèd under humble cheere,  
 And under hewe of trouthe in swich manerc,  
 Under plesance, and under bisy peyne,  
 That I ne koude han wend he koude feyne,  
 So depe in greyn he dyed his coloures.  
 Right as a serpent hit<sup>1</sup> hym under floures  
 Til he may seen his tymè for to byte,  
 Right so this god of love, this ypocryte,  
 Dooth so his cerymonyes and obeisaunces,  
 And kepeth in semblant alle his observaunces  
 That sowneth into<sup>2</sup> gentillesse of love.  
 As in a toumbe is al the faire above,  
 And under is the corps, swich as ye woot,  
 Swich was the ypocryte, bothe coold and hoo  
 And in this wise he served his entente,  
 That save the feend, noon wiste what he me.  
 Til he so longe hadde wopen and compleyned,  
 And many a yeer his service to me feyned,  
 Til that myn herte, to pitous and to nyce<sup>3</sup>,  
 Al innocent of his corouned malice,  
 For-ferèd of his deeth, as thoughte me,  
 Upon his othes and his seuretee,  
 Graunted hym love upon this condicioun,  
 That evermoore myn honour and renoun  
 Were savèd, bothè privee and apert:  
 This is to seyn, that after his desert,

<sup>1</sup> hit, hides.<sup>2</sup> sowneth into, tend towards.<sup>3</sup> nyce

I yaf hym al myn herté and my thought,—  
 God woot, and he, that otherwise noght,—  
 And took his herte in chaunge for myn for ay;  
 But sooth is seyde, goon sithen many a day,  
 "A trewe wight and a thief thenken nat oon";  
 And whan he saugh the thyng so fer y-gooun  
 That I hadde graunted hym fully my love,  
 In swich a gyse as I have seyde above,  
 And yeven hym my trewé herte as fre  
 As he swoor he yaf his herté to me;  
 Anon this tigre ful of doublenesse  
 Fit on his knees with so devout humblesse,  
 With so heigh reverence, and, as by his cheere,  
 So lyk a gentil love-re of manere,  
 So ravysshed, as it seméd, for the joye,  
 That never Jason, ne Parys of Troye,—  
 Jason? Cértès, noon oother man  
 Syn Lameth was, that alderfirst bigan  
 To loven two, as writen folk biforn;  
 Ne never, syn the firsté man was born,  
 Ne koudé man, by twenty thousand part,  
 Countrefeté the sophymes of his art,  
 Ne wére worthy unbokelen his galoche  
 Ther doublenesse or feynyng sholde approche  
 Ne so koude thanke a wight as he dide me.  
 His manere was an hevene for to see  
 Til any womman, were she never so wys,  
 So peynted he, and kembde at point-levys,  
 As wel his wordés as his contenaunce.  
 And I so loved hym for his obersaunce,  
 And for the trouthe I demed in his herte,  
 That if so wére that any thyng hym smerte  
 Al wére it never so lite, and I it wiste,  
 Me thoughte I felte deeth myn herte twiste;  
 And shortly, so fertoorth this thing is went,

That my wyl was his willés instrument,—  
 This is to seyn, my wyl obeyed his wyl  
 In allè thyng, as fer as resoun fil,  
 Kepyng the boundés of my worshiþe ever;  
 Ne never hadde I thyng so lief, ne lever,  
 As hym, God woot! ne never shal namo.  
 This lasteth lenger than a yeer or two  
 That I supposéd of hym noght but good;  
 But finally thus, atté laste it stood,  
 That Fortune woldé that he mosté twynne<sup>1</sup>  
 Out of that placé which that I was inne.  
 Wher<sup>2</sup> me was wo, that is no questioun;  
 I kan nat make of it discripsioun,  
 For o thyng dare I tellen boldély,  
 I knowe what is the peyne of deeth ther-by:  
 Swich harme I felte for he ne myghte bileve!  
 So on a day of me he took his leve,  
 So sorwful eek that I wende verrailly  
 That he had felt as muché harm as I,  
 Whan that I herde hym speke and saugh his hewe;  
 But nathelees I thoughte he was so trewe,  
 And eek that he repairé sholde ageyn  
 Withinne a litel while, sooth to seyn,  
 And resoun wolde eek that he mosté go  
 For his honóur, as ofte it happeth so,  
 That I made vertu of necessitee,  
 And took it wel, syn that it mosté be.  
 As I best myghte I hidde fro hym my sorwe  
 And took hym by the hond, Seint John to borwe<sup>3</sup>,  
 And seyde hym thus: "Lo, I am yourés al;  
 Beth swich as I to yow have been and shall".  
 What he answerde it nedeth noght reherce;  
 Who kan say bet than he, who can do werre?

<sup>1</sup> *twynne*, depart.<sup>2</sup> *wher*, whether.<sup>3</sup> with St. John as my surety.

Whan he hath al i-seyd, thanne hath he doon.  
 "Therefore bihoveth hire a ful long spoon  
 That shal ete with a feend," thus herde I seye;  
 So attē laste he mostē forth his weye,  
 And forth he fleeth til he cam ther hym leste,  
 Whan it cam hym to purpos for to reste.  
 I trowe he haddē thilkē text in mynde.  
 That "Allē thyng repeiryng to his kynde  
 Gladeth hymself,"—thus seyn men, as I gesse.  
 Men loven of proprē kynde newefangelnesse,  
 As briddēs doon that men in cages fede;  
 For though thou nyght and day take of hem hede,  
 And strawe hir cagē faire, and softe as silk,  
 And yeve hem sugre, hony, breed and milk,  
 Yet right anon as that his dore is uppe,  
 He with his feet wol spurne adoun his cuppe,  
 And to the wode he wole, and wormēs ete;  
 So newefangel been they of hire mete  
 And loven novelrie of proprē kynde,  
 No gentillesse of blood ne may hem bynde.

"So ferde this tercēlet, allas, the day!  
 Though he were gentil born, fressh and gay,  
 And goodlich for to seen, humble and free.  
 He saugh upon a tyme a kytē flee,  
 And sodeynly he loved this kytē so  
 That al his love is clene fro me ago,  
 And hath his trouthe falsēd in this wyse.  
 Thus hath the kyte my love in hire servyse,  
 And I am lorn withouten remedie."  
 And with that word this faucon gan to crie,  
 And swownēd eft in Canacēēs barm.

Greet was the sorwe for the haukēs harm  
 That Canacee and alle hir wommen made;  
 They nystē how they myghte the faucon glade,  
 But Canacee hom bereth hire in hir lappe,





## {PART III}

Apollo whirleth up his chaar so hye,  
Til that the god Mercurius hous, the slye—

[At this point Chaucer left the tale 'half-told'.]

## II. PRIORESS'S TALE

*The Prologe of the Prioresses Tale*

O LORD, oure Lord, thy name how merveillous  
Is in this largè world y-sprad," quod she;  
"For noght oonly thy laudè precious  
Parfournèd is by men of dignitee,  
But by the mouth of children thy bountee  
Parfournèd is; for on the brest soukfyng  
Sontymè shewen they thyn heriynge.

Wherfore, in laude as I best kan or may,  
Of thee, and of the whitè lylle flour,  
Which that the bar and is a mayde alway,  
To telle a storie I wol do my labour;  
Nat that I may encreessen hir honour,  
For she hirself is honour and the roote  
Of bountee, next hir sone, and soulès boote.

O mooder mayde! O maydè mooder fre!  
O bussch unbrent, brennyng in Moyses sighte!  
That ravysedest down fro the Deitee,  
Thugh thyn humblesse, the goost that in thaligite:  
Of whos vertu, whan he thyn hertè lighte,  
Conceyved was the fadrès sapience,  
Helpe me to telle it in thy reverence!

Lady, thy bountee, thy magnificence,  
Thy vertu, and thy grete humylitee,



And eek also, where as he saugh thymage  
Of Cristès mooder, he hadde in usage,  
As hym was taught, to knele adoun and seye  
His *Ave Marie*, as he goth by the weye.

Thus hath this wydwe hir litel sone y-taught  
Oure blisful lady, Cristès mooder deere,  
To worshipe ay, and he forgate it naught,  
For sely<sup>1</sup> child wol alday soonè leere,—  
But ay whan I remembre on this mateere,  
Seint Nicholas stant<sup>2</sup> ever in my presence,  
For he so yong to Crist dide reverence.

This litel child his litel book lernynge,  
As he sat in the scole at his prymer,  
He *Alma redemptoris* herdè synge,  
As children lerned hire antiphoner;  
And, as he dorste, he drough hym ner and ner,  
And herked ay the wordès and the noote,  
Till he the firstè vers koude al by rote.

Noght wiste he what this Latyn was to seye,  
For he so yong and tendre was of age;  
But on a day his felawe gan he preye  
Texpounden hym this song in his langage,  
Or telle him why this song was in usage;  
This preyde he hym to construe and declare  
Ful often time upon his knowes<sup>3</sup> bare.

His felawe, which that elder was than he,  
Answerde hym thus: "This song I have herd seye  
Was makèd of oure blisful lady free,  
Hire to salve, and eek hire for to preye  
To been oure help and socour whan we deye;  
I kan na moore expounde in this mateere,  
I lernè song, I kan but smal grammeere".

<sup>1</sup> sely, simple.<sup>2</sup> stant, stands.<sup>3</sup> knowes, bones.

“And is this song makèd in reverence  
 Of Cristès mooder?” seyde this innocent.  
 “Now certès, I wol do my diligence  
 To konne it al, er Cristémasse is went,  
 Though that I for my prymer shal be shent,  
 And shal be beten thriès in an houre,  
 I wol it konne oure lady for to honóure!”

His felawe taughte hym homward prively  
 Fro day to day, til he koude it by rote,  
 And thanne he song it well and boldély  
 Fro word to word, acordynge with the note.  
 Twiès a day it passèd thurgh his throte,  
 To scoléward and homward whan he wente;  
 On Cristès mooder set was his entente.

As I have seyde, thurgh-out the Jewerie  
 This litel child, as he cam to and fro,  
 Ful murily then wolde he synge and crie  
*O Alma redemptoris* evermo.  
 The swetnesse hath his hertè percèd so  
 Of Cristès mooder, that to hire to preye  
 He kan nat stynte of syngyng by the weye.

Oure firstè foe, the serpent Sathanas,  
 That hath in Jewès herte his waspès nest,  
 Up swal, and seide, “O Hebrayk peple, allas!  
 Is this to yow a thyng that is honést  
 That swich a boy shal walken as hym lest  
 In youre despit, and syng of swich sentence,  
 Which is agayn youre lawès reverence?”

Fro thennès forth the Jewès han conspired  
 This innocent out of this world to chace.  
 An homycidé ther-to han they hyred,  
 That in an aleye hadde a privee place;  
     the child gan forby for to pace,

This cursèd Jew hym hente and heeld hym faste,  
And kitte his throte, and in a pit hym caste.

I seye that in a wardrobe they hym threwe  
Where as this Jewës purgen hire entraille.

O cursèd folk, O Herodës al newe!  
What may youre yvel ententë yow availle?  
Mordre wol out, certëyn, it wol nat faille,  
And namely ther thonour of God shal sprede,  
The blood out-crieth on youre cursèd dede.

O martir, sowded to<sup>1</sup> virginitee!  
Now maystow synge, folwyng ever in oon  
The whitë Lamb celestial, quod she,  
Of which the grete Evaungelist, Seint John,  
In Pathmos wroot, which seith that they that goon  
Biforn this Lamb, and syng a song al newe,  
That never fleschly women they ne knewe.

This poure wydwe awaiteth al that nyght  
After hir litel child, but he cam nought,  
For which, as soone as it was dayës lyght,  
With facë pale of drede and bisy thought,  
She hath at scole and elles-where him sought.  
Til finally she gan so fer espie  
That he last seyn was in the Jewerie.

With moodrës pitce in hur brest enclosed  
She gooth, as she were half out of hur mynde,  
To every placë where she hath supposid  
By liklihede hir litel child to fynde;  
And ever on Cristës mooder, meeke and kinde,  
She cride, and attë lastë thus she wroghte,  
Among the cursèd Jewes she hym soughte.

She frayneth<sup>2</sup> and she preyeth pitously,  
To every Jew that dwelte in thulke place,

To telle hire if hir child wente oght forby.  
 They seyde "Nay"; but Jhesu, of his grace,  
 Yaf in hir thoght inwith<sup>1</sup> a litel space,  
 That in that place after hir sone she cryde,  
 Where he was casten in a pit bisyde.

O greté God that parfournest thy laude  
 By mouth of innocents, lo, heere thy myght?  
 This gemme of chastité, this emeraude,  
 And eek of martirdom the ruby bright,  
 Ther he, with throte y-korven, lay upright?<sup>2</sup>  
 He *Alma redemptoris* gan to syng,  
 So loude, that all the placé gan to ryng!

The cristene folk, that thurgh the streté wente,  
 In comen, for to wondre upon this thyng;  
 And hastily they for the provost sente.  
 He cam anon, withouten tarrying,  
 And herieth Crist that is of hevene kyng,  
 And eek his mooder, honour of mankynde,  
 And after that the Jewés leet he bynde.

This child, with pitous lamentacioun,  
 Up-taken was, syngyng his song alway;  
 And with honour of greet processoun  
 They carien hym unto the nexte abbay.  
 His mooder swownyng by his beeré lay;  
 Unnethé myghte the peplé that was there  
 This newe Rachel bryngé fro his bere.

With torment, and with shameful deeth echon  
 This provost dooth the Jewés for to sterve,  
 That of this mordré wiste, and that anon;  
 He noldé no swich cursednesse observe;  
 "Yvele shal have that yvele wol deserve";

<sup>1</sup> *withun*.

<sup>2</sup> *upright*, on his back, with his face up

Therefore with wildé hors he dide hem drawe,  
And after that he heng hem by the lawe.

Upon his beere ay lith this innocent  
Riform the chief auter, whil massé laste,  
And after that the abbot with his covent  
Han sped hem for to burien hym ful faste;  
And when they hooly water on hym caste,  
Yet spak this child, whan spreynd was hooly water.  
And song, *O Alma redemptoris mater!*

This abbot, which that was an hooly man,  
As monkès been, or ellès oghtè be,  
This yongè child to conjure he bigan,  
And seyde, "O deerè child, I halsè<sup>1</sup> thee,  
In vertu of the hooly Trinitee,  
Tell me what is thy causè for to synge,  
Sith that thy throte is kut, to my semyng?"

"My throte is kut unto my nekkè boon,"  
Seydè this child, "and as by wey of kynde  
I sholde have dyed, ye, longè tyme agon;  
But Jhesu Crist, as ye in bookès fynde,  
Wil that his glorie laste and be in mynde,  
And, for the worship of his mooder deere,  
Yet may I synge *O Alma* loude and cleere

"This welle of mercy, Cristès mooder sweete,  
I loved alwey, as after my konnyng,  
And whan that I my lyf sholdè forlete,  
To me she cam, and bad me for to synge  
This antheme verrailly in my deyng.  
As ye han herd, and whan that I hadde songen  
Me thoughte she leyde a greyn upon my tungen

<sup>1</sup> *halss*, conjure



Wherfore I synge, and syngè moot certyn  
 In honour of that blisful mayden free,  
 Til fro my tonge of-taken is the greyn;  
 And after that thus seyde she to me,  
 'My litel child, now wol I fecché thee  
 Whan that the greyn is fro thy tonge y-take;  
 Be nat agast, I wol thee nat forsake'."

This hooly monk, this abbot, hym mene I,  
 His tonge out caughte and took away the greyn,  
 And he yaf up the goost ful softely.  
 And whan this abbot hadde this wonder seyn,  
 His saltè teeris trikkled down as reyn,  
 And gruf<sup>1</sup> he fil, al plat upon the grounde,  
 And stille he lay as he had ben y-bounde.

The covent eke lay on the pavément,  
 Wepyng and heryng Cristès mooder deere,  
 And after that they ryse and forth been went,  
 And tooken away this martir from his beere;  
 And in a tombe of marbul stonès cleere,  
 Enclosen they his litel body sweete:  
 Ther he is now, God leve us for to meete!

O yongè Hugh of Lyncoln, slayn also  
 With cursèd Jewes, as it is notåble,  
 For it is but a litel while ago,  
 Preye eek for us, we synful folk unstable,  
 That of his mercy God, so merciåble,  
 On us his gretè mercy multiplie  
 For reverence of his mooder, Marie. *Amen.*

<sup>1</sup> *gruf*, on his face.

III. PARDONERS' TALE

*Here begynnethe The Pardoners Tale*

**I**N Flaundres whilom was a compaignye  
 Of yongé folk, that haunteden folye,  
 As riot, hasard, stywés and tavernes,  
 Where as with harpes, lutes and gyternes,  
 They daunce and pleyen at dees, bothe day and nyght,  
 And eten also, and drynken over hir nyght,  
 Thurgh which they doon the devel sacrifice  
 Withinne that develes temple, in curséd wise,  
 By superfluytee abhomynable.  
 Hir othes been so grete and so dampnable  
 That it is grisly for to heere hem swere;  
 Oure blessed Lordes body they to-tere.  
 Hem thoughte that Jewes rente hym noght ynough,  
 And ech of hem at otheres synné lough:  
 And right anon thanne comen tombesteres<sup>1</sup>  
 Fetys and smale, and yongé frutesteres,  
 Syngeres with harpes, baudés, wafereres<sup>2</sup>,  
 Whiche been the verray develes officers,  
 To kyndle and blowe the fyr of lecherye,  
 That is annexéd unto glotonye.  
 The Hooly Writ take I to my witnessse  
 That luxurie is in wyn and dronkenesse.  
 "Lo, how that dronken Looth, unkindly<sup>3</sup>,  
 Lay by his doghters two unwytyngly,  
 So dronke he was he nyste what he wroughte.  
 Herodés, (who so wel the stories soghte,)  
 Whan he of wyn was repleet at his feste,  
 Right at his owené table, he yaf his heeste  
 To sleen the Baptist John, ful gylteless.

<sup>1</sup> Tombesteres, tombestres, tombestres.

<sup>2</sup> Wafereres, waferers, waferers.

<sup>3</sup> Unkindly, unkindly, unkindly.

Seneca seith a good word, doutélecs;  
 He seith he kan no differencè fynde  
 Bitwix a man that is out of his mynde  
 And a man which that is dronkélewe,  
 But that woodnessè, fallen in a shrewe,  
 Persévereth lenger than dooth dronkenesse.  
 O glotonyé, ful of cursednesse;  
 O causè first of oure confusioun;  
 O original of oure dampnacioun;  
 Til Crist hadde boght us with his blood agayn<sup>1</sup>

Ló, how deeré, shortly for to sayn,  
 Aboght was thilkè cursèd vileynye;  
 Corrupt was al this world for glotonye!  
 Adam oure fader, and his wyf also,  
 Fro Paradys, to labour and to wo  
 Were dryven for that vice, it is no drede,—  
 For whil that Adam fasted, as I rede,  
 He was in Paradys, and whan that he  
 Eet of the fruyt deffended, on the tree,  
 Anon he was out cast to wo and peyne.  
 O glotonye, on thee wel oghte us pleyne!

O, wiste a man how manye maladyes  
 Folwen of excesse and of glotonyes,  
 He wolde been the moore mesurable  
 Of his dieté, sittynge at his table!  
 Allas! the shorte throte, the tendré mouth,  
 Maketh that est and west, and north and south,  
 In erthe, in air, in water, man to-swynke  
 To gete a glotoun deyntee mete and drynke!  
 Of this matiere, O Paul, wel kanstow trete!  
 “Mete unto wombe, and wombe eek unto mete,  
 Shal God destroyen bothe”, as Paulus seith.  
 Allas! a foul thyng is it, by my feith,  
 To seye this word, and fouler is the dede  
 man so drynketh of the white and rede,

That of his throte he maketh his pyvey,  
Thurgh thilké curséd superfluitee.

The Apostel wepyng with ful pitously,  
"Ther walken manye of whiche yow toold have I.  
I seye it now wepyng with pitous voys,  
That they been enemys of Cristès croys,  
Of whiche the ende is deeth, wombe is hir god".  
O wombe! O bely! O stynkyng is thi cod!  
Fulfilled of donge and of corrupcioun!  
At either ende of thee foul is the soun:  
How greet labour and cost is thee to fynde!  
Thise cookes, how they stampe, and stryng, and gryt  
And turnen substaunce into accident<sup>1</sup>,  
To fulfillen al thy likerous talent<sup>2</sup>!  
Out of the hardé bonés knocké they  
The mary, for they casté noght away  
That may go thurgh the golet softe and swoote.  
Of spicerie, of leef, and bark, and roote,  
Shal been his sauce y-makéd by delit,  
To make hym yet a newer appetit:  
But certés he that haunteth swiche delices  
Is deed, whil that he lyveth in the vices.

A lecherous thyng is wyn, and dronkenesse  
Is ful of stryvyng and of wrecchednesse.  
O dronké man! disfigured is thy face,  
Sour is thy breeth, foul artow to embrace,  
And thurgh thy dronké nose semeth the soun,  
As though thou seydest ay, "Sampsoun! Sampsoun"  
And yet, God woot, Sampsoun drank never no wyn.  
Thou fallest as it were a stykéd swyn.  
Thy tonge is lost and al thyn honeste cure:  
For dronkenesse is verray sepulture  
Of mannès wit and his discrecioun:

<sup>1</sup> To destroy the body of the creature, i.e.

<sup>2</sup> *l'objet de son plaisir* (Latham).



Of catel, and of tyme, and fourthermo  
 It is repreewe and contrarie of honour  
 For to ben holde a commune hasardour  
 And ever the hyer he is of estaat,  
 The mooré is he holden desolaat.  
 If that a pryncé useth hasardrye  
 In allé governaunce and policye,  
 He is, as by commune opinioun,  
 Y-holde the lasse in reputacioun.

Stilbon, that was a wys embassadour,  
 Was sent to Corynthe in ful greet honour  
 Fro Lacidomye to maken hire alliaunce;  
 And whan he cam, hym happedé *par chance*  
 That alle the gretteste that were of that lond  
 Pléyyng atte hasard he hem fond;  
 For which, as sooné as it myghte be,  
 He stal hym hoom agayn to his contree,  
 And seyde, "Ther wol I nat lese my name,  
 Ne I wol nat take on me so greet defame,  
 Yow for to allie unto none hasardours;  
 Sendeth othere wise embassadours,  
 For, by my trouthe, me were levere dye,  
 Than I yow sholde to hasardours allye;  
 For ye that been so glorious in honour,  
 Shul nat allyén yow with hasardours,  
 As by my wyl, ne as by my trecte!"  
 This wisé philosophe thus seyde hee.

Looke eek that to the kyng Demetrius,  
 The kyng of Parthés, as the book seith us,  
 Sente him a paire of dees of gold, in scorn,  
 For he hadde uséd hasard ther-biforn,  
 For which he heeld his glorie or his renown  
 At no value or reputacioun.  
 Lordés may tynden oother maner pley  
 Honeste vough to dryve the day away.

Now wol I speke of othés false and grete  
 A word or two, as oldé bookés trete.  
 Gret sweryng is a thyng abhomináble,  
 And fals sweryng is yet moore repreváble.  
 The heighé God forbad sweryng at al,—  
 Witnesse on Mathew, but in special  
 Of sweryng seith the hooly Jeremye,  
 “Thou shalt seye sooth thyne othés, and nat lye  
 And swere in doom, and eek in rightwisnesse”;  
 But ydel sweryng is a cursednesse.  
 Bihoold and se, that in the firsté table  
 Of heighé Goddés heestés, honorable,  
 How that the seconde heeste of hym is this:  
 “Take nat my name in ydel, or amys”;  
 Lo, rather he forbedeth swich sweryng  
 Than homycide, or many a curséd thyng;  
 I seye that as by ordré thus it stondeth.  
 This knowen, that his heestés understondeth,  
 How that the seconde heeste of God is that;  
 And forther over, I wol thee telle, al plat,  
 That vengeance shal nat parten from his hous  
 That of his othes is to outrageous,—  
 “By Goddes precious herte”, and “By his nayles”,  
 And “By the blood of Crist that is in Hayles”,  
 “Sevene is my chaunce, and thyn is cynk and treye,  
 By Goddes armés, if thou falsly pleye,  
 This daggere shal thurghout thyn herté go!”  
 This fruyt cometh of the bicched<sup>1</sup> bones two,  
 Forsweryng, ire, falsnesse, homycide.  
 Now for the love of Crist that for us dyde,  
 Leveth youre othes, bothe grete and smale.  
 But, sires, now wol I telle forth my tale.  
 These riotoures thre, of whiche I telle,  
 Longe erst er prime rong of any belle,

<sup>1</sup> *bicched*, cursed.

Were set hem in a taverne for to drynke;  
 And as they sat they herde a bellë clynke  
 Biforn a cors, was caried to his grave.  
 That oon of hem gan callen to his knave:  
 "Go bet<sup>1</sup>", quod he, "and axë redily  
 What cors is this that passeth heer forby,  
 And looke that thou reporte his namë weel".

"Sire," quod this boy, "it nedeth never a deel.  
 It was me toold er ye cam heere two houres;  
 He was, *parizee*, an old felawe of youres,  
 And sodeynly he was y-slayn to-nyght,  
 For-dronke, as he sat on his bench upright;  
 Ther cam a privee thief, men clepeth Death,  
 That in this contree al the peplë sleeth,  
 And with his spere he smoot his herte atwo,  
 And wente his wey withouten wordës mo.  
 He hath a thousand slayn this pestilence,  
 And, maister, er ye come in his presence,  
 Me thynketh that it werë necessarie  
 For to be war of swich an adversarie;  
 Beth redy for to meete hym evermoore:  
 Thus taughtë me my dame: I sey namoore."

"By Seinte Marië!" seyde this taverner,  
 "The child seith sooth, for he hath slayn this yeer  
 Henne over a mile, withinne a greet village.  
 Bothe man and womman, child, and byne, and page:  
 I trowe his habitacioun be there;  
 To been avysëd greet wysdom it were,  
 Er that he dide a man a dishonour."

"Ye, Goddës armës!" quod this riotour,  
 "Is it swich peril with hym for to meete?  
 I shal hym sike by wey, and eek by strote;  
 I make away to Goddes digne home."  
 Herkneeth, felawes, we thre been al orew,



Lat ech of us holde up his hand til oother,  
 And ech of us bicomē otheres brother,  
 And we wol sleen this falsē traytour, Deeth;  
 He shal be slayn, he that so manye sleeth,  
 By Goddēs dignitee, er it be nyght!"

Togidres han thise thre hir trouthēs plight  
 To lyve and dyen ech of hem for oother,  
 As though he were his owene y-borē brother;  
 And up they stirte, al dronken, in this rage;  
 And forth they goon towardēs that village  
 Of which the taverner hadde spoke biforn;  
 And many a grisly ooth thanne han they sworn;  
 And Cristēs blessed body they to-rente,—  
 Deeth shal be deed, if that they may hym hente.

Whan they han goon nat fully half a mile,  
 Right as they wolde han troden over a stile,  
 An oold man and a pourē with hem mette;  
 This oldē man ful mekely hem grette,  
 And seyde thus: "Now, lordes, God yow see!"

The proudeste of thise riotourēs thre  
 Answerde agayn, "What, carl with sory grace,  
 Why artow al for-wrapped, save thy face?  
 Why lystow so longe in so greet age?"

This olde man gan looke in his visage,  
 And seyde thus: "For I ne kan nat fynde  
 A man, though that I walkē into Ynde,  
 Neither in citee, ne in no village,  
 That wolde chaunge his youthe for myn age;  
 And therfore moot I han myn age stille,  
 As longe tyme as it is Goddes wille.  
 Ne Deeth, allas! ne wol nat han my lyf;  
 Thus walke I, lyk a resteles kaityf,  
 And on the ground, which is my moodrēs gate,  
 I knokke with my staf, erly and late,  
 And seye, "Leeve mooder, leet me in!"

how I vanysche, flessch and blood and skyn;  
 alas! whan shul my bones been at reste?  
 wonder, with yow wolde I chaungè my cheste  
 that in my chambrè longè tyme hath be,  
 for an heyrè-clowt to wrappè me!"

But yet to me she wol nat do that grace,  
 for which ful pale and welkèd is my face.

"But, sires, to yow it is no curteisye  
 to speken to an old man vileynye,  
 that he trespasse in word, or elles in dede.

Hooly Writ ye may your self wel rede,  
 gayns<sup>1</sup> an oold man, hoor upon his heed,  
 he sholde arise; wherfore I yeve yow reed,  
 to dooth unto an oold man noon harm now,  
 unmoorè than ye wolde men did to yow  
 agè, if that ye so longe abyde.

And God be with yow, where ye go or ryde;  
 noote go thider as I have to go."

"Nay, oldè cherl, by God, thou shalt nat so!"  
 ydè this oother hasardour anon;

Thou partest nat so lightly, by Seint John!  
 Thou spak right now of thilkè traytour, Deeth,  
 that in this contree alle oure freendès sleeth;  
 have heer my trouthe, as thou art his espye,  
 telle where he is, or thou shalt it abyde,  
 by God and by the hooly sacrament!

For soothly, thou art oon of his assent  
 to sleen us yongè folk, thou falsè theef!"

"Now, sires," quod he, "if that ye be so leef  
 to fyndè Deeth, turne up this croked wey,  
 for in that grove I lasfe hym, by my fey,  
 under a tree, and there he wole abyde;  
 ought for youre boost he wole him no thyng hyde.  
 I ye that ook? Right there ye shal hym fynde.

<sup>1</sup> agayns, in the presence of.

God savé yow that boghte agayn mankynde,  
And yow amende!" thus seyde this oldé man;  
And evérich of thise riotourés ran  
Til he cam to that tree, and ther they founde,  
Of floryns fyne, of gold y-coynéd rounde,  
Wel ny a seven busshels, as hem thoughte.  
No lenger thanné after Deeth they soughte,  
But ech of hem so glad was of that sighte,  
For that the floryns been so faire and brighte,  
That down they sette hem by this precious hoord.  
The worste of hem he spak the firsté word.

"Bretheren," quod he, "taak kepé what I seye;  
My wit is greet, though that I bourde and pleye.  
This tresor hath Fortúne unto us yeven  
In myrthe and joliftee oure lyf to lyven,  
And lightly as it comth so wol we spende.  
Ey, Goddés precious dignitee! who wende  
To-day, that we sholde han so fair a grace?  
But myghte this gold be caried fro this place  
Hoom to myn hous, or ellés unto youres,—  
For wel ye woot that al this gold is oures,—  
Thanne weré we in heigh felicitee.  
But trewely, by daye it may nat bee;  
Men woldé seyn that we were thevès stronge,  
And for oure owené tresor doon us honge.  
This tresor moste y-caried be by nyghte  
As wisely and as slyly as it myghte.  
Wherfore, I rede that cut among us alle  
Be drawe, and lat se wher the cut wol falle;  
And he that hath the cut with herté blithe  
Shal renné to the towne, and that ful swithe,  
And brynge us breed and wyn ful prively,  
And two of us shul kepen subtilly  
This tresor wel; and if he wol nat tarie,  
Whan it is nyght we wol this tresor carie,

By oon assent, where as us thynketh best."  
 That oon of hem the cut broghte in his fest,  
 And bad hem drawe and looke where it wol falle;  
 And it fil on the yongeste of hem alle,  
 And forth toward the toun he wente anon;  
 And al so soonè as that he was gon.  
 That oon of hem spak thus unto that oother:  
 "Thow knowest wel thou art my swornè brother;  
 Thy profit wol I tellè thee anon;  
 Thou woost wel that oure felawe is agon,  
 And heere is gold, and that ful greet plentee,  
 That shal departed been among us thre;  
 But nathéless, if I kan shape it so  
 That it departed were among us two,  
 Hadde I nat doon a freendès torn to thee?"

That oother answerde, "I noot how that may be;  
 He woot how that the gold is with us tweye:  
 What shal we doon, what shal we to hym seye?"

"Shal it be conseil?" seyde the firstè shrewe,  
 "And I shal tellen thee in wordès fewe  
 What we shal doon, and bryngen it wel aboute."

"I grauntè," quod that oother, "out of doute,  
 That by my trouthe I shal thee nat biwreye."

"Now," quod the firstè, "thou woost wel we be  
 tweye,

And two of us shul strenger be than oon.  
 Looke whan that he is set, and right anoon  
 Arys, as though thou woldest with hym pleye,  
 And I shal ryve hym thurgh the sydès tweye,  
 Whil that thou strogelest with hym as in game,  
 And with thy daggere looke thou do the same;  
 And thanne shal al this gold departed be.  
 My deerè freend, bitwixen me and thee.  
 Thanne may we bothe oure lurtès all fulfillen.  
 And pleye at dees right at oure owene wille."



Into the nexte strete unto a man,  
 And borwed hym large botellés thre,  
 And in the two his poyson poured he;  
 The thridde he kepte elene for his owenè drynke;  
 For al the nyght he shoope hym for to swynke  
 In cariynge of the gold out of that place.  
 And whan this riotour with sory grace  
 Hadde filled with wyn his gretè botels thre,  
 To his felawes agayn repaireth he.

What nedeth it to sermone of it moore?  
 For right as they hadde cast his deeth bifoore,  
 Right so they han hym slayn, and that anon,  
 And whan that this was doon thus spak that oon:  
 "Now lat us sitte and drynke, and make us merie  
 And afterward we wol his body berie";  
 And with that word it happed hym, *par cas*,  
 To take the botel ther the poyoun was,  
 And drank and yaf his felawe drynke also,  
 For which anon they storven bothè two.

But certès, I suppose that Avycen  
 Wroot never in no Canon, ne in no sen,  
 Mo wonder signès of empoisonyng  
 Than hadde thise wrecches two. er hir endyng  
 Thus ended been thise homycidès two,  
 And eek the false empoysonere also.

O cursed synne of allè cursednesse!  
 O traytorous homycide! O wikkednesse!  
 O glotonye, luxurie, and hasardrye!  
 Thou blasphemour of Crist with vileynye,  
 And othès grette, of usage and of pride!  
 Allas! mankynde, how may it bitide  
 That to thy Creatour which that thee wroghte,  
 And with his precious hertè-blood thee boghte,  
 Thou art so fals and so unkynde, allas!

Now, goode men, God foryeve yow youre trespas,  
 And ware yow fro the synne of avarice.  
 Myn hooly pardoun may yow alle warice,  
 So that ye offre nobles, or sterlynges,  
 Or ellés silver broches, spoonés, rynges.  
 Boweth youre heed under this hooly bulle!  
 Cometh up, ye wyvès, offreth of youre wolle!  
 Youre names I entre heer in my rolle anon;  
 Into the blisse of hevене shul ye gon;  
 I yow assoillè by myn heigh power,—  
 Yow that wol offre,—as clene and eek as cleer  
 As ye were born; and lo, sires, thus I preche,  
 And Jhesu Crist, that is oure soulés leche,  
 So grauntè yow his pardoun to receyve;  
 For that is best; I wol yow nat deceyve.

“But, sires, o word forgat I in my tale;  
 I have relikes and pardoun in my male<sup>1</sup>  
 As faire as any man in Engeland,  
 Whiche were me yeven by the popes hond.  
 If any of yow wole of devocioun  
 Offren, and han myn absolucioun,  
 Com forth anon, and kneleth heere adoun,  
 And mekely receyveth my pardoun,  
 Or elles taketh pardoun as ye wende,  
 At newe and fressh at every miles ende,—  
 So that ye offren, alwey newe and newe,  
 Nobles or pens, whiche that be goode and trewe.  
 It is an honour to everich that is heer  
 That ye mowe have a suffisant Pardoneer  
 Lassolle yow in contree as ye ryde,  
 For aventüres whiche that may bityde.  
 Paraventure ther may tallen oon or two  
 Doun of his hors and breke his nekke atwo;

<sup>1</sup> *male*, bag.





## IV. NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

*Here bigynneth The Nonnes Preestes Tale of the Col  
and Hen,—Chauntecleer and Pertelote*

APOURE wydwe, somdel stape in age  
Was whilom dwellyng in a narwe cotage  
Beside a grevé, stondynge in a dale.  
This wydwe, of which I tellé yow my tale,  
Syn thilké day that she was last a wyf,  
In pacience ladde a ful symple lyf,  
For litel was hir catel and hir rente.  
By housbondrie of swich as God hire sente  
She foond hirself, and eek hire doghtren two.  
Thre largé sowés hadde she, and namo;  
Three keen and eek a sheep that highté Malle.  
Ful sooty was hir bour, and eek hire halle,  
In which she eet ful many a sklendre meel;  
Of poynaunt sauce hir neded never a deel.  
No deyntee morsel passéd thurgh hir throte,  
Hir diete was accordant to hir cote;  
Repleccioun ne made hire never sik,  
Attempreé diete was al hir phisik,  
And exercise, and hertés suffisaunce.  
The gouté lette hire no-thing for to daunce,  
Napoplexié shenté nat hir heed;  
No wyn ne drank she, neither whit ne reed;  
Hir bord was servéd moost with whit and blak,—  
Milk and broun breed,—in which she foond no l  
Seynd<sup>1</sup> bacoun and somtyme an ey or tweye,  
For she was, as it were, a maner deye<sup>2</sup>.  
A yeerd she hadde, enclosed al aboute  
With stikkés, and a dryé dych withoute,

<sup>1</sup> *seynd*, fried.

<sup>2</sup> *a maner deye*, a kind of dairy-woman



As Chauntécleer among his wyvès alle  
 Sat on his perchè, that was in the halle,  
 And next hym sat this fairè Pertelote,  
 This Chauntécleer gan gronen in his throte,  
 As man that in his dreem is drecchéd<sup>1</sup> soore.  
 And whan that Pertelote thus herde hym roore,  
 She was agast, and seyde, "O herté deere!  
 What eyleth yow, to grone in this manére?  
 Ye been a verray sleper; fy, for shame!"

And he answerde and seyde thus: "Madame,  
 I pray yow that ye take it nat agrief;  
 By God, me mette<sup>2</sup> I was in swich meschief  
 Right now, that yet myn herte is soore aflight.  
 Now God", quod he, "my swevene recche aright,  
 And kepe my body out of foul prisoun!  
 Me mette how that I roméd up and doun  
 Withinne our yeerd, wheer as I saugh a beest  
 Was lyk an hound, and wolde han maad areest  
 Upon my body, and han had me deed.  
 His colour was bitwixé yelow and reed,  
 And tippéd was his tayl, and bothe his eeris,  
 With blak, unlyk the remenant of his heeris;  
 His snowtè small, with glowynge eyen tweye.  
 Yet of his look for feere almoost I deye;  
 This causéd me my gronyng doutélees."

"Avoy!" quod she, "fy on yow, hertélees!  
 Allas!" quod she, "for by that God above!  
 Now han ye lost myn herte and al my love.  
 I kan nat love a coward, by my feith!  
 For certès, what so any womman seith,  
 We alle desiren, if it mightè bee,  
 To han housbóndés hardy, wise, and free,  
 And secree, and no nygard, ne no fool,  
 Ne hym that is agast of every tool,

<sup>1</sup> *drecched*, troubled.

<sup>2</sup> *me mette*, I dreamed.

Ne noon avauntour, by that God above!  
 How dorste ye ceyn, for shene, unto your hawt  
 That any thyng myghte make yow of id?  
 Have ye no mannés herte, and han a braid?  
 "Allas! and konne ye been agast of swerens?  
 No thyng, God woot, but vanitee in swerene is,  
 Swerens engendren of reprociouns,  
 And ofte of fume, and of complerciouns,  
 Whan humours been so habundant in a wight.  
 "Certés this dreem, which ye han met to nyght,  
 Cometh of the greet superfluytee  
 Of youré redé colera, *fantasia*,  
 Which causeth folk to dreden in hir dreem  
 Of arwés, and of fyre with rede lemes,<sup>1</sup>  
 Of redé breestes, that they wol hem lyte,  
 Of contekes and of whelpes, grete and lyte;  
 Right as the humour of malencolie  
 Causeth ful many a man in sleepe to crye,  
 For feere of blake beres, or holes blake,  
 Or ellés blaké devyls wole hem take,  
 Of othere humours koude I telle also  
 That werken many a man in sleepe ful wo;  
 But I wol passe as lightly as I kan.  
 Lo, Catoun, which that was so wys a man,  
 Seyde he nat thus, "Ne do no fore of dremes?"

"Now, sire," quod she, "whan we flee fro the  
 bemes,

For Goddés love, as tak I my lyste,  
 Up peril of my soule, and of my lyf,  
 I conseilþe yow the beste, I wol out lye,  
 That bothe of colere and of malencolie  
 Ye purge yow, and þer ye shal nat tene,  
 Though in this town is no exapothecarie,  
 I shal myself to herbes to ben yow

That shul been for youre hele, and for youre prow  
 And in oure yeerd tho herbés shal I fynde,  
 The whiche han of hire propretee by kynde  
 To purgé yow, bynethe and eek above.  
 Forget nat this, for Goddés owenè love!  
 Ye been ful coleryk of compleccioun.  
 Warè the sonne in his ascencioun  
 Ne fynde yow nat replet of humours hooete;  
 And if it do, I dar wel leye a grote  
 That ye shul have a fevere terciane,  
 Or an agu, that may be youré bane.  
 A day or two ye shul have digestyves  
 Of wormés, er ye take youre laxatyves  
 Of lawriol, centaure and fumetere,  
 Or elles of ellèbor that groweth there,  
 Of katapuce or of gaitrys beryis,  
 Of herbe yve, growyng in oure yeerd, ther mery is;  
 Pekke hem up right as they growe and ete hem yn;  
 Be myrie, housbonde, for youre fader kyn!  
 Dredeth no dreem; I kan sey yow namoore."

"Madame," quod he, "*graunt mercy* of youre loore  
 But nathélees, as touchyng daun Catoun,  
 That hath of wysdom swich a greet renoun,  
 Though that he bad no dremés for to drede  
 By God, men may in oldé bookés rede  
 Of many a man, moore of auctorite  
 Than ever Caton was, so moot I thee!  
 That al the revers seyn of his sentence,  
 And han wel founden by experience  
 The dremes been significaciouns  
 As wel of joye as tribulaciouns,  
 That folk enduren in this lif present.  
 Ther nedeth make of this noon argument,  
 The verray preeve sheweth it in dede.

<sup>1</sup> *prow*, good.

"Oon of the pretty benycted floure men is  
 Seith thus, that while in two felawshippes  
 On pilgrimage, in a ful goode entente,  
 And happed so they coomen in a town,  
 Wher as ther was swich congregacioun  
 Of peple, and ech sort of herberage,  
 That they ne founde as muche accomode  
 In which they bothe myghte lodged be,  
 Wherefore they mosten of necessity,  
 As for that nyght, departen companye;  
 And ech of hem gooth to his hesterye,  
 And took his lodging as it wolde falle,  
 That oon of hem was lodged in a stable,  
 Fer in a yeerd, with oxen of the plough,  
 That eother man was lodged wel ynough,  
 As was his aventure, or his fortune,  
 That us governeth alle as in comune.

"And so lufel that longe or it were day,  
 This man mette in his bed, ther as he lay,  
 How that his felawe gan up on hym calle,  
 And seyde, "Allas! for in an oxestalle  
 This nyght I shal be mordred ther I live,  
 Now helpe me, deere brother, or I dye,  
 In alle haste com to me," he seyde.

"This man out of his slepe, for terribil ravis,  
 But whan that he was wakened of his felawe,  
 He turned hym and took of this no keep;  
 Hym thoughte his dreem nas but a vaine;  
 Thus twice in his slepyng dreamed he  
 And atte thridde tyme yet his felawe  
 Cam, as hym therwith, and seyde, "I am a  
 slave."

Biheold my bloode now, and my payne,  
 Arys up early in the mornynge,  
 And at the weete of the daye.



Mordre is so whatsomel, abyeyayable  
To God, that is cert and reordable,  
That he ne wol nat suffre it heled be,  
Though it abyde a year, or two, or thre ;  
Mordre wol out, this my conclusoun  
And right anon, ministers of that toun  
Han hent the carter, and to tere hym, ynyed,  
And eek the hostiler to seore engyned,  
That they bikneweþ hire wikkednesse anay,  
And were an-changed by the nekké lon.

"Here may men see that dreames been to drede;  
 And certes, in the same booke I rede,  
 Right in the nexte chapitre after this,  
 I gabbe nat, so have I joye or blis,  
 Two men that wolde han passed over see,  
 For certeyn cause, into a fer contree,  
 If that the wynd ne hadde been contrarye,  
 That made hem in a cote for to tarye  
 That stood ful myrie up on an haven syde;  
 But on a day, awayn the even tyde,  
 The wynd gan chaunge, and b'ewright as hem to do,  
 Jolif and glad they wente unto hir restre,  
 And casten hem ful crye for to saille.

" But to that o man fil a greet marvelle;  
 That con of hem in slepyng as he lay,  
 Hym mette a wonder dreem, agayn the day.  
 Hym thoughte a man stood by his bedde syde,  
 And hym commanded that he shoulde abyde.  
 And seyde hym thus: " If thou trowest on me,  
 Thou shalt be dreght, my tale is, I trowe."

"He work, and bid his fellow workers mellow,  
And prayd him his wages for to tell;  
And so that shewd he prayd him to be  
He prayd that he shold be a good man."





That ye hadde rad his legende as I have I,  
 Dame Pertelote, I sey yow trewely,  
 Macrobeus, that writ the avi-boun,  
 In Affrike of the worthy Cupidon,  
 Affirmeth dremes, and seith that they been  
 Warnyng of thynges that men after seuen;  
 And forther moore, I pray yow looketh wel  
 In the Oldé Testament of Daniel,  
 If he herd dremes any vanitee.

"Reed eek of Joseph, and ther shul ye see  
 What dremes he somtyme,—I sey nat alle,—  
 Warnyng of thynges that shul after fulle  
 Looke of Egipte the kyng, daun Pharaon,  
 His baker and his butiller also,  
 What they ne felte noon effect in dremes,  
 Whoso wol seken actes of sondry remes,  
 May rede of dremes many a wonder thyng.

"Lo, Cresus, which that was of Lyde kyng,  
 Mette he nat that he sat upon a tree,  
 Which signified he sholde unchanged be."

"Lo heere Andromacha, Ector's wyf,  
 That day that Ector sholde lese his lyf,  
 She dremed on the same nyght biforn,  
 How that the lyf of Ector sholde be born,  
 If thilke day he wente into bataille;  
 She warned hym, but it myghte nat availe,  
 He wente forth to fighte natheles,  
 And he was slayn anon of Achilles.  
 But thilke tale is al to longe to tellen,  
 And eek it is my day, I may nat dwellen."  
 Shortly I sey, as for certeyn tour,  
 That I shal han of this avowoun  
 Advysed, and I seye to yow, myn oon,  
 That I ne relye on this dreem no more.









ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

Therwith ye han in musyk moore feelyng  
 Than hadde Boece, or any that kan synge.  
 My lord youre fader,—God his soule blesse!  
 And eek youre mooder, of hire gentillesse,  
 Han in myn hous y-been to my greet ese,  
 And certés, sire, ful fayn wolde I yow plese.  
 But for men speke of syngyng, I wol seye,—  
 So moote I brouké<sup>1</sup> wel myne eyen tweye,—  
 Save yow, I herdé never man so synge  
 As dide youre fader in the morwenyng.  
 Certés, it was of herte, al that he song;  
 And for to make his voys the mooré strong,  
 He wolde so peyne hym that with bothe his eyen  
 He mosté wynke, so loude he woldé cryen;  
 And stonden on his tiptoon therwithal,  
 And strecché forth his nekké, long and smal;  
 And eek he was of swich discrecioun  
 That ther nas no man in no regioun  
 That hym in song or wisdom myghté passe.  
 I have wel rad, in “Daun Burnel the Asse”,  
 Among his vers, how that ther was a cok,  
 For that a preestés sone yaf hym a knok  
 Upon his leg, whil he was yong and nyce,  
 He made hym for to lese his benefice;  
 But certeyn, ther nys no comparisoun  
 Bitwixe the wisdom and discrecioun  
 Of youré fader and of his subtiltee.  
 Now syngeth, sire, for seinté charitee;  
 I at se, konne ye youre fader countrefete.”

This Chauntécleer his wyngés gan to bete,  
 As man that koude his traysoun nat espie,  
 So was he ravysshed with his flaterie.

Allas, ye lordés, many a fals flatour  
 In youre courtes, and many a losengeour<sup>2</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> of

<sup>2</sup> *losengeour*, flatterer.

That pleyn your welth and, by law, forl,  
Than he that so dilleth us, unto your chyl,  
Redeth Eche, wote of floure,  
Both way, ye lordes, of far trecherye.

This Chauntecler stode byc up, in his tere,  
Sneechnge his necke, and he bled his eyes, &c.,  
And gan to crie loud for the nere,  
And daun Russell, the fox, sterte up atone,  
And by the target heate Chauntecler,  
And on his bak toward the wode hym bore;  
For yet ne was ther no man that hym coude.

O deffinee, that mayst nat been couched,  
Ake, that Chauntecler sleigh fro the bone,  
Allas, his wyf ne re, late let of dreame,  
And on a Friday morn, this me chaunce.

O Venus, that art possider of pleynure,  
Syn that thy servant was the Chauntecler,  
And in thy serveye dide al his powert,  
Mo ne for delft than wote to multiplye,  
Why wote stow, sette hym on thy day to dy?

O Gaufrid, deere master, so rayn,  
That, when thy worthy kynz Richard sawe, &c.,  
With shot, complaynd, & his deffiance,  
Why ne hold, I now thy sentence, & thy law,  
The Friday for to chide, & Giden ye?  
For on a Friday, so thid, slay we le,  
Thanne wolde I shew how that I leide playe,  
For Chauntecler dode, & for his praye.

Certes, which ever, nill to telfe,  
We never of lady, nill, & of Yll,  
We wanne, and thur, & thur, & thur,  
We, & thur, & thur, & thur, & thur,



## ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

As maden alle the hennés in the clos,  
 Whan they had seyn of Chauntéclee the sighte.

But sovereynly dame Pertéloté shrighthe,  
 Ful louder than dide Hasdrubalés wyf,  
 Whan that hir housbonde haddé lost his lyf,  
 And that the Romayns haddé brend Cartage,—  
 She was so ful of torment and of rage,  
 That wilfully into the fyr she sterte,

And brende hireselven with a stedefast herte.  
 O woful hennés, right so criden ye,  
 As, whan that Nero brendé the citee

Of Romé, cryden senatourés wyves,  
 For that hir husbondes losten alle hir lyves  
 Withouten gilt,—this Nero hath hem slayn.  
 Now wol I torné to my tale agayn.

This sely widwe, and eek hir doghtrés two,  
 Herden thise hennés crie and maken wo,  
 And out at dorés stirten they anon,

And syen the fox toward the grové gon,  
 And bar upon his bak the cok away,  
 And cryden, "Out! harrow! and weylaway!  
 Ha! ha! the fox!" and after hym they ran,

And eek with stavés many another man;  
 Ran Colle, oure dogge, and Talbot, and Gerlan  
 And Malkyn, with a dystaf in hir hand;  
 Ran cow and calf, and eek the verray hogges,  
 So were they fered for berkyng of the dogge.

And shoutyng of the men and wommen eek  
 They ronné so hem thoughte hir herté breek  
 The dokés cryden, as feendés doon in helle;  
 The gees, for feeré, flowen over the trees;  
 The hye cam the swarm of bees;  
 The bees, as they cam, a benedicitee!

his meyne

Ne made never charyte-falsh chere",  
 Whan that they wolde crye hym "Hil!",  
 As thilke day was maad up on the fox,  
 Of her they bryghten beamed, and of her,  
 Of horn, of beem, in which they blew and poynted,  
 And therewithal they striked and they humped.  
 It semed as that hevene chokid falle.

Now, gode men, I pray yow her to thow",  
 Lo, how Fortune turneth sodynly  
 The hope and pryde eek of hit enemy!  
 This cok, that lay upon the fexe-luk,  
 In al his drede unto the fox he spak,  
 And seyde, "Sire, if that I were a ye,  
 Yet wolde I seyn, as wyse God help me,  
 "Turneth agayn, ye proude cherke-calle!  
 A verray pestilence upon yow falle;  
 Now am I come unto the wodes-cyde,  
 Maupree youre heed, the cok shal here abyde;  
 I wol hym cte in feith, and that is a"

The fox answerde, "In feith it shal be don";  
 And as he spak that word, al sodynly  
 This cok brak from his mouth delyverly,  
 And heighe upon a tree he fleigh anon.  
 And whan the fox saugh that he was ygon,

"Alas!" quod he, "O Chauntecleer, alas!  
 I have to yow", quod he, "y do on tre gas,  
 In as muche as I made yow aferd,  
 Whan I yow hente and bryghte out of the yerd,  
 But, sire, I dide it of no wikke entente.  
 Com down, and I shal telle yow what I mented;  
 I shal seye sooth to yow, God help me so!"

"Nay thanne," quod he, "I shrewe us bette twi,  
 And first I shrewe myself, bothe blood and herte,  
 If thou bisce me any offer than ones.

# ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

Thou shalt na moorè, thurgh thy flateryc,  
Do me to synge, and wynkè with myn eye,  
For he that wynketh, whan he sholdè see,  
Al wilfully, God lat him never thee!  
“Nay,” quod the fox, “but God yeve hym mes-  
chaunce,

That is so undiscreet of governaunce  
That jangleth whan he sholdè holde his pees.”

Lo, swich it is for to be recchèlees,  
And negligent, and truste on flaterye.  
But ye that holden this tale a folye,—  
As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,—  
Táketh the moralité, good men;  
For Seint Paul seith that al that writen is,  
To oure doctrine it is y-write y-wis;  
Taketh the fruyt and lat the chafe be stille.  
Now, goodè God, if that it be thy wille,  
As seith my lord, so make us alle goode men,  
And brynge us to his heighè blisse! Amen.

## V. THE MONK'S TALE OF UGOLINO

*The Tale of 'Huguelin',—Ugolino of Pisa,—is the eleventh of the series of seventeen 'tragedies' successively related by the Monk. They have no definite sequence, and nothing in common but the 'unhappy ending', in which, according to mediæval theory, the essential quality of tragedy lay.*

O! the erl HUGELYN OF PYZÈ the langour  
Ther may no tonge telle for pitee;  
But litel out of Pize stant a tour,  
In whichè tour in prisoun put was he,  
And with hym been his litel children thre;  
The eldeste scarsly fyf yeer was of age.  
Allas, Fortune! it was greet crueltee  
Swiche briddès for to putte in swiche a cage!





Dampnéd was he to dyen in that prison,  
 For Roger, which that bisshope was of Pize,  
 Hadde on hym maad a fals suggestioun  
 Thurgh which the peple gan upon hym rise  
 And putten hym to prison, in swich wise  
 As ye han herd, and mete and drynke he hadde  
 So smal, that wel unnethe it may suffice,  
 And therewithal it was ful poure and badde.

And on a day bifil that in that hour  
 Whan that his meté wont was to be broght,  
 The gayler shette the dorés of the tour.  
 He herde it wel, but he ne spak right noght,  
 And in his herte anon ther fil a thoght  
 That they for hunger woldé doon hym dyen.  
 "Allas!" quod he, "allas, that I was wrought!"  
 Therwith the teeris fillen from his eyen.

His yongé sone, that thre yeer was of age,  
 Unto hym seyde, "Fader, why do ye wepe?  
 Whanne wol the gayler bryngen oure potage;  
 Is there no morsel breed that ye do kepe?  
 I am so hungry that I may nat slepe;  
 Now woldé God that I myghte slepen evere!  
 Thanne sholde nat hunger in my wombe crepe:  
 Ther is no thyng, but breed, that me were levere."

Thus day by day this child bigan to crye,  
 Til in his fadres barn adoun it lay,  
 And seyde, "Farewel, fader, I moot dye!"  
 And viste his fader, and dyde the samé day:  
 And whan the woful fader deed it say,  
 For so his armés two he ran to byte,  
 And he seyde, "Allas, Fortune! and weylaway!"  
 "Thy luf" whel my woul may I wyte!

## ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

is children wende that it for hunger was  
hat he his armés gnow, and nat for wo,  
and seyde, "Fader, do nat so, allas!  
But rather ete the flessch upon us two;  
Oure flessch thou yaf us, take oure flessch us fro,  
And ete ynogh",—right thus they to hym seyde,  
And after that, withinne a day or two,  
They leyde hem in his lappe adoun and deyde.

Hymself, despeired, eek for hunger starf;  
Thus ended is this myghty erl of Pize;  
From heigh estaat Fortúne away hym carf.  
Of this tragédie it oghte ynough suffice.  
Whoso wol here it in a lenger wise,  
Redeth the greté poete of Ytaille  
That highté Dant, for he kan al devyse  
Fro point to point,—nat o word wol he faille.

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## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

(1564-1616)

### VI. THE RAPE OF LUCRECE

FROM the besieged Ardea all in post,  
Borne by the trustless wings of false desire,  
Lust-breathed Tarquin leaves the Roman host,  
And to Collatium bears the lightless fire  
Which, in pale embers hid, lurks to aspire  
And girdle with embracing flames the waist  
Of Collatine's fair love, Lucrece the chaste.

Haply that name of "chaste" unhappily set  
This bateless edge on his keen appetite;  
When Collatine unwisely did not let  
To praise the clear unmatched red and white

Which triumph'd in that day of his delight,  
 When mortal stars and planets bow'd to his bright  
 With pure aspect did him peerless dance.

For he the night before, in Terpsichore's tent,  
 Unlock'd the treasure of his happy state;  
 What priceless wealth the heavens had him best  
 In the possession of his beautiful mate;  
 Reckoning his fortune at such high proud rate,  
 That kings might be espoused to no terms,  
 But king nor peer to such a peerless dame.

O happiness enjoy'd but of a few!  
 And, if possess'd, as soon decay'd and done  
 As is the morning's silver melting dew  
 Against the golden splendour of the sun!  
 An expired date, cancell'd ere well begun,  
 Honour and beauty, in the owner's arms,  
 Are weakly tortur'd from a world of harms.

Beauty itself doth of itself persuade  
 The eyes of men without an order;  
 What needeth then apology be made,  
 To set forth that which is common star?  
 Or why is Collatine the public ear  
 Of that rich jewel she should keep undrawn  
 From thievish eyes, because it is her own?

Perchance his heart of Lucrece's beauty  
 Suggested the proud name of a dowry,  
 For by our ears our hearts are tempted;  
 Perchance that cloyed sense of Lucrece  
 Having conquer'd Lucrece's chastity,  
 He unlock'd the store, that he might draw  
 A dowry  
 That a dowry might be made a dowry.





Which triumph'd in that sky of his delight,  
Where mortal stars, as bright as heaven's beauties,  
With pure aspects did him peculiar duties.

For he the night before, in Tarquin's tent,  
Unlock'd the treasure of his happy state;  
What priceless wealth the heavens had him lent  
In the possession of his beauteous mate;  
Reckoning his fortune at such high-proud rate,  
That kings might be espoused to more fame,  
But king nor peer to such a peerless dame.

O happiness enjoy'd but of a few!  
And, if possess'd, as soon decay'd and done  
As is the morning's silver-melting dew  
Against the golden splendour of the sun!  
An expired date, cancell'd ere well begun:  
Honour and beauty, in the owner's arms,  
Are weakly fortress'd from a world of harms.

Beauty itself doth of itself persuade  
The eyes of men without an orator;  
What needeth then apologies be made,  
To set forth that which is so singular?  
Or why is Collatine the publisher  
Of that rich jewel he should keep unknown  
From thievish ears, because it is his own?

Perchance his boast of Lucrece' sovereignty  
Suggered this proud issue of a king;  
For by our ears our hearts oft tainted be:  
Perchance that envy of so rich a thing,  
Braving compare, disdainfully did sing  
His high pitch'd thoughts, that meaner men should  
vout;  
That golden hap which their superiors want.

ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

But some untimely thought did instigate  
His all-too-timeless speed, if none of those:  
His honour, his affairs, his friends, his state,  
Neglected all, with swift intent he goes  
To quench the coal which in his liver glows.  
O rash false heat, wrapp'd in repentant cold,  
Thy hasty spring still blasts, and ne'er grows old!

When at Collatium this false lord arrived,  
Well was he welcomed by the Roman dame,  
Within whose face beauty and virtue strived  
Which of them both should underprop her fame.  
When virtue bragg'd, beauty would blush for shame;  
When beauty boasted blushes, in despite  
Virtue would stain that o'er with silver white.

But beauty, in that white intituled,  
From Venus' doves doth challenge that fair field:  
Then virtue claims from beauty beauty's red,  
Which virtue gave the golden age to gild  
Their silver cheeks, and call'd it then their shield;  
Teaching them thus to use it in the fight,  
When shame assail'd, the red should fence the white.

This heraldry in Lucrece' face was seen,  
Argued by beauty's red and virtue's white:  
Of either's colour was the other queen,  
Proving from world's minority their right:  
Yet their ambition makes them still to fight;  
The sovereignty of either being so great,  
That oft they interchange each other's seat.

Their silent war of lilies and of roses,  
Which Tarquin view'd in her fair face's field,  
In their pure ranks his traitor eye encloses;  
Where, lest between them both it should be kill'd,





Or, journey more, the point of excess  
Is but to suffer, and such griefs sustain,  
That they prove bankrupt in this poor-rich gain.

The aim of all is but to nurse the life  
With honour, wealth, and ease, in waning age;  
And in this aim there is such thwarting strife,  
That one for all, or all for one we gage;  
A life for honour in fell battle's rage;  
Honour for wealth; and oft that wealth doth cost  
The death of all, and all together lost.

So that in venturing ill we leave to be  
The things we are for that which we expect;  
And this ambitious foul infirmity,  
In having much, torments us with defect  
Of that we have: so then we do neglect  
The thing we have; and, all for want of wit,  
Make something nothing by augmenting it.

Such hazard now must doting Tarquin make,  
Pawning his honour to obtain his lust;  
And for himself himself he must forsake:  
Then where is truth, if there be no self-trust?  
When shall he think to find a stranger just,  
When he himself himself confounds, betrays  
To slanderous tongues and wretched hateful days?

Now stole upon the time the dead of night,  
When heavy sleep had closed up mortal eyes:  
No comfortable star did lend his light,  
No noise but owls' and wolves' death-boding cries:  
Now comes the season that they may surprise  
The silly land: so pure thoughts are dead and still,  
While lust and murder wake to stain and kill.



True valour still a true respect should have;  
 Then my discretion is too vile, too base,  
 That it will live engraven in my face.

"Yea, though I die, the scandal will survive,  
 And be an eye-sore in my golden coat;  
 Some loathsome dash the herald will contrive,  
 To cipher me how fondly I did dote;  
 That my posterity, shamed with the note,  
 Shall curse my bones, and hold it for no sin  
 To wish that I their father had not been.

"What win I, if I gain the thing I seek?  
 A dream, a breath, a froth of fleeting joy.  
 Who buys a minute's mirth to wail a week?  
 Or sells eternity to get a toy?  
 For one sweet grape who will the vine destroy?  
 Or what fond beggar, but to touch the crown,  
 Would with the sceptre straight be stricken down?

"If Collatinus dream of my intent,  
 Will he not wake, and in a desperate rage  
 Post hither, this vile purpose to prevent?  
 This siege that hath engirt his marriage,  
 This blur to youth, this sorrow to the sage,  
 This dying virtue, this surviving shame,  
 Whose crime will bear an ever-during blame?

"O, what excuse can my invention make,  
 When thou shalt charge me with so black a deed?  
 Will not my tongue be mute, my frail joints shake,  
 Mine eye forego their light, my false heart bleed?  
 The guilt being great, the fear doth still exceed;  
 And extreme fear can neither fight nor fly.  
 But a word like with trembling terror die.











ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

And therein heartens up his servile powers,  
Who, flatter'd by their leader's jocund show,  
Stuff up his lust, as minutes fill up hours;  
And as their captain, so their pride doth grow,  
Paying more slavish tribute than they owe.

By reprobate desire thus madly led,  
The Roman lord marcheth to Lucrece' bed.

The locks between her chamber and his will,  
Each one by him enforced retires his ward;  
But, as they open, they all rate his ill,  
Which drives the creeping thief to some regard:  
The threshold grates the door to have him heard;  
Night-wandering weasels shriek to see him there;  
They fright him, yet he still pursues his fear.

As each unwilling portal yields him way,  
Through little vents and crannies of the place  
The wind wars with his torch to make him stay,  
And blows the smoke of it into his face,  
Extinguishing his conduct in this case;  
But his hot heart, which fond desire doth scorch,  
Puffs forth another wind that fires the torch:

And being lighted, by the light he spies  
Lucretia's glove, wherein her needle sticks:  
He takes it from the rushes where it lies,  
And griping it, the needle his finger pricks;  
As who would say "This glove to wanton tricks  
Is not inured, return again in haste;  
'Thou see'st our mistress' ornaments are chaste".

But all these poor forbiddings could not stay him;  
He in the worst sense construes their denial:  
The doors, the wind, the glove, that did delay him,  
Are for accidental things of trial;



This said, his guilty hand pluck'd up the latch,  
 And with his knee the door he opens wide.  
 The dove sleeps fast that this night-owl will catch:  
 Thus treason works ere traitors be espied.  
 Who sees the lurking serpent steps aside;  
     But she, sound sleeping, fearing no such thing,  
     Lies at the mercy of his mortal sting.

Into the chamber wickedly he stalks,  
 And gazeth on her yet unstained bed.  
 The curtains being close, about he walks,  
 Rolling his greedy eyeballs in his head:  
 By their high treason is his heart misled;  
     Which gives the watch-word to his hand full soon,  
     To draw the cloud that hides the silver moon.

Look, as the fair and fiery-pointed sun,  
 Rushing from forth a cloud, bereaves our sight;  
 Even so, the curtain drawn, his eyes begun  
 To wink, being blinded with a greater light:  
 Whether it is that she reflects so bright,  
     That dazzleth them, or else some shame supposed;  
     But blind they are, and keep themselves enclosed.

O, had they in that darksome prison died!  
 Then had they seen the period of their ill;  
 Then Collatine again, by Lucrece' side,  
 In his clear bed might have reposed still:  
 But they must ope, this blessed league to kill:  
     And holy-thoughted Lucrece to their sight  
     Must sell her joy, her life, her world's delight.

Her lily hand her rosy cheek lies under,  
 Cozening the pillow of a lawful kiss;  
 Who, therefore angry, seems to part in sunder,  
     "    " on either side to want his bliss;





ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

As the grim lion fawneth o'er his prey,  
Sharp hunger by the conquest satisfied,  
So o'er this sleeping soul doth Tarquin stay,  
His rage of lust by gazing qualified;  
Slack'd, not suppress'd; for standing by her side,  
His eye, which late this mutiny restrains,  
Unto a greater uproar tempts his veins:

And they, like straggling slaves for pillage fighting,  
Obdurate vassals fell exploits effecting,  
In bloody death and ravishment delighting,  
Nor children's tears nor mothers' groans respecti'  
Swell in their pride, the onset still expecting:  
Anon his beating heart, alarum striking,  
Gives the hot charge and bids them do their liking.

His drumming heart cheers up his burning eye,  
His eye commends the leading to his hand;  
His hand, as proud of such a dignity,  
Smoking with pride, march'd on to make his stand  
On her bare breast, the heart of all her land;  
Whose ranks of blue veins, as his hand did scale,  
Left their round turrets destitute and pale.

They, mustering to the quiet cabinet  
Where their dear governess and lady lies,  
Do tell her she is dreadfully beset,  
And fright her with confusion of their cries:  
She, much amazed, breaks ope her lock'd-up eyes,  
Who, peeping forth this tumult to behold,  
Are by his flaming torch dimm'd and controll'd.

Imagine her as one in dead of night  
From forth dull sleep by dreadful fancy waking,  
Thinks she hath beheld some ghastly sprite,  
Sets every joint a-shaking;



ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

Thus I forestall thee, if thou mean to chide:  
Thy beauty hath ensnared thee to this night,  
Where thou with patience must my will abide;  
My will that marks thee for my earth's delight,  
Which I to conquer sought with all my might;  
    But as reproof and reason beat it dead,  
    By thy bright beauty was it newly bred.

"I see what crosses my attempt will bring;  
I know what thorns the growing rose defends;  
I think the honey guarded with a sting;  
All this beforehand counsel comprehends:  
But will is deaf and hears no heedful friends;  
    Only he hath an eye to gaze on beauty,  
    And dotes on what he looks, 'gainst law or dut'

"I have debated, even in my soul,  
What wrong, what shame, what sorrow I shall breed,  
But nothing can affection's course control,  
Or stop the headlong fury of his speed.  
I know repentant tears ensue the deed,  
    Reproach, disdain, and deadly enmity;  
    Yet strive I to embrace mine infamy."

This said, he shakes aloft his Roman blade,  
Which, like a falcon towering in the skies,  
Coucheth the fowl below with his wings' shade,  
Whose crooked beak threatens if he mount he dies:  
So under his insulting falchion lies  
    Harmless Lucretia, marking what he tells  
    With trembling fear, as fowl hear falcon's bells.

"Lucrece," quoth he, "this night I must enjoy thee:  
If thou deny, then force must work my way,  
For in thy bed I purpose to destroy thee:  
    " 'Tis done, some worthless slave of thine I'll slay,



But when a black-faced cloud the world doth threat,  
In his dim mist the aspiring mountains hiding,  
From earth's dark womb some gentle gust doth get,  
Which blows these pitchy vapours from their biding,  
Hindering their present fall by this dividing;  
    So his unhallow'd haste her words delays,  
    And moody Pluto winks while Orpheus plays.

Yet, foul night-waking cat, he doth but dally,  
While in his hold-fast foot the weak mouse panteth:  
Her sad behaviour feeds his vulture folly,  
A swallowing gulf that even in plenty wanteth:  
His ear her prayers admits, but his heart granteth  
    No penetrable entrance to her plaining:  
    Tears harden lust, though marble wear with raining.

Her pity-pleading eyes are sadly fixed  
In the remorseless wrinkles of his face;  
Her modest eloquence with sighs is mixed,  
Which to her oratory adds more grace.  
She puts the period often from his place;  
    And midst the sentence so her accent breaks,  
    That twice she doth begin ere once she speaks.

She conjures him by high almighty Jove,  
By knighthood, gentry, and sweet friendship's oath,  
By her untimely tears, her husband's love,  
By holy human law, and common troth,  
By heaven and earth, and all the power of both,  
    That to his borrow'd bed he make retire,  
    And stoop to honour, not to foul desire.

Quoth she, "Reward not hospitality  
With such black payment as thou hast pretended;  
Mud not the fountain that gave drink to thee;  
Mar not the thing that cannot be amended;

End thy ill aim before thy shoot be ended;  
He is no woodman that doth bend his bow  
To strike a poor unseasonable doe.

“My husband is thy friend; for his sake spare me:  
Thyself art mighty; for thine own sake leave me:  
Myself a weakling; do not then ensnare me:  
Thou look’st not like deceit; do not deceive me.  
My sighs, like whirlwinds, labour hence to heave thee:  
If ever man were moved with woman’s moans,  
Be moved with my tears, my sighs, my groans:

“All which together, like a troubled ocean,  
Beat at thy rocky and wreck-threatening heart,  
To soften it with their continual motion;  
For stones dissolved to water do convert.  
O, if no harder than a stone thou art,  
Melt at my tears, and be compassionate!  
Soft pity enters at an iron gate.

“In Tarquin’s likeness I did entertain thee:  
Hast thou put on his shape to do him shame?  
To all the host of heaven I complain me,  
Thou wrong’st his honour, wound’st his princely name  
Thou art not what thou seem’st; and if the same,  
Thou seem’st not what thou art, a god, a king;  
For kings like gods should govern every thing.

“How will thy shame be seeded in thine age,  
When thus thy vices bud before thy spring  
If in thy hope thou darest do such outrage,  
What darest thou not when once thou art a king?  
O, be remember’d, no outrageous thing  
From vassal actors can be wiped away;  
Then kings’ misdeeds cannot be hid in clay.

ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

This deed will make thee only loved for fear;  
But happy monarchs still are fear'd for love:  
With foul offenders thou perforce must bear,  
When they in thee the like offences prove:  
If but for fear of this, thy will remove;  
For princes are the glass, the school, the book,  
Where subjects' eyes do learn, do read, do look.

"And wilt thou be the school where Lust shall learn?  
Must he in thee read lectures of such shame?  
Wilt thou be glass wherein it shall discern  
Authority for sin, warrant for blame,  
To privilege dishonour in thy name?  
Thou back'st reproach against long-living laud,  
And makest fair reputation but a bawd.

"Hast thou command? by him that gave it thee,  
From a pure heart command thy rebel will:  
Draw not thy sword to guard iniquity,  
For it was lent thee all that brood to kill.  
Thy princely office how canst thou fulfil,  
When, pattern'd by thy fault, foul sin may say,  
He learn'd to sin, and thou didst teach the way?

"Think but how vile a spectacle it were,  
To view thy present trespass in another.  
Men's faults do seldom to themselves appear;  
Their own transgressions partially they smother:  
This guilt would seem death-worthy in thy brother.  
O, how are they wrapp'd in with infamies  
That from their own misdeeds askance their eyes!

"To thee, to thee, my heaved-up hands appeal,  
Not to seducing lust, thy rash relier:  
I sue for exiled majesty's repeal;  
Let him return, and flattering thoughts retire:

His true respect will prison false desire,  
And wipe the dim mist from my doting eyne,  
That thou shalt see thy state and pity mine."

"Have done," quoth he: "my uncontrolled tide  
Turns not, but swells the higher by this let.  
Small lights are soon blown out, huge fires abide,  
And with the wind in greater fury fret:  
'The petty streams that pay a daily debt  
To their salt sovereign, with their fresh falls' haste  
Add to his flow, but alter not his taste."

"Thou art", quoth she, "a sea, a sovereign king;  
And, lo, there falls into thy boundless flood  
Black lust, dishonour, shame, misgoverning,  
Who seek to stain the ocean of thy blood.  
If all these petty ills shall change thy good,  
Thy sea within a puddle's womb is hearsed,  
And not the puddle in thy sea dispersed.

"So shall these slaves be king, and thou their slave;  
'Thou nobly base, they basely dignified;  
'Thou their fair life, and they thy fouler grave:  
'Thou loathed in their shame, they in thy pride:  
'The lesser thing should not the greater hide;  
The cedar stoops not to the base shrub's foot,  
But low shrubs wither at the cedar's root.

"So let thy thoughts, low vassals to thy state"—  
"No more," quoth he; "by heaven, I will not hear thee:  
Yield to my love; if not, enforced hate,  
Instead of love's coy touch, shall rudely tear thee:  
That done, despitefully I mean to bear thee  
Unto the base bed of some rascal groom,  
To be thy partner in this shameful doom."



ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

This said, he sets his foot upon the light,  
For light and lust are deadly enemies:  
Shame folded up in blind concealing night,  
When most unseen, then most doth tyrannize.  
The wolf hath seized his prey, the poor lamb cries;  
Till with her own white fleece her voice controll'd  
Entombs her outcry in her lips' sweet fold:

For with the nightly linen that she wears  
He pens her piteous clamours in her head;  
Cooling his hot face in the chastest tears  
'That ever modest eyes with sorrow shed.  
O, that prone lust should stain so pure a bed!  
The spots whereof could weeping purify,  
Her tears should drop on them perpetually.

But she hath lost a dearer thing than life,  
And he hath won what he would lose again:  
This forced league doth force a further strife;  
This momentary joy breeds months of pain;  
This hot desire converts to cold disdain:  
Pure Chastity is rifled of her store,  
And Lust, the thief, far poorer than before.

Look, as the full-fed hound or gorged hawk,  
Unapt for tender smell or speedy flight,  
Make slow pursuit, or altogether balk  
The prey wherein by nature they delight;  
So surfeit-taking Tarquin fares this night:  
His taste delicious, in digestion souring,  
Devours his will, that lived by foul devouring.

O, deeper sin than bottomless conceit  
Can comprehend in still imagination!  
Drunken Desire must vomit his receipt,  
Ere he can see his own abomination.

While Lust is in his pride, no exclamation  
Can curb his heat or rein his rash desire,  
Till like a jade Self-will himself doth tire.

And then with lank and lean discolour'd cheek,  
With heavy eye, knit brow, and strengthless pace,  
Feeble Desire, all recreant, poor, and meek,  
Like to a bankrupt beggar wails his case:  
The flesh being proud, Desire doth fight with Grace,  
For there it revels; and when that decays,  
The guilty rebel for remission prays.

So fares it with this faultful lord of Rome,  
Who this accomplishment so hotly chased;  
For now against himself he sounds this doom,  
That through the length of times he stands disgraced:  
Besides, his soul's fair temple is defaced;  
To whose weak ruins muster troops of cares,  
To ask the spotted princess how she fares.

She says, her subjects with foul insurrection  
Have batter'd down her consecrated wall,  
And by their mortal fault brought in subjection  
Her immortality, and made her thrall  
To living death and pain perpetual:  
Which in her prescience she controlled still,  
But her foresight could not forestall their will.

Even in this thought through the dark night he stealeth,  
A captive victor that hath lost in gain;  
Bearing away the wound that nothing healeth,  
The scar that will, despite of cure, remain:  
Leaving his spoil perplex'd in greater pain.  
She bears the load of lust he left behind,  
And he the burthen of a guilty mind.



Blind muffled bawd! dark harbour for defame!  
Grim cave of death! whispering conspirator  
With close-tongued treason and the ravisher!

“O hateful, vaporous, and foggy Night!  
Since thou art guilty of my cureless crime,  
Muster thy mists to meet the eastern light,  
Make war against proportion'd course of time;  
Or if thou wilt permit the sun to climb  
His wonted height, yet ere he go to bed,  
Knit poisonous clouds about his golden head.

“With rotten damps ravish the morning air;  
Let their exhaled unwholesome breaths make sick  
The life of purity, the supreme fair,  
Ere he arrive his weary noon-tide prick;  
And let thy misty vapours march so thick,  
That in their smoky ranks his smother'd light  
May set at noon and make perpetual night.

“Were Tarquin Night, as he is but Night's child,  
The silver-shining queen he would distain;  
Her twinkling handmaids too, by him defiled,  
Through Night's black bosom should not peep again:  
So should I have co-partners in my pain;  
And fellowship in woe doth woe assuage,  
As palmers' chat makes short their pilgrimage.

“Where now I have no one to blush with me,  
To cross their arms and hang their heads with mine,  
To mask their brows and hide their infamy;  
But I alone alone must sit and pine.  
Seasoning the earth with showers of silver brine,  
Mingling my talk with tears, my grief with groans,  
Poor wasting monuments of lasting moans.

"O Night, thou furnace of foul-reeking smoke,  
Let not the jealous Day behold that face  
Which underneath thy black all-hiding cloak  
Immodestly lies martyr'd with disgrace!  
Keep still possession of thy gloomy place,  
That all the faults which in thy reign are made  
May likewise be sepulchred in thy shade!

"Make me not object to the tell-tale Day!  
The light will show, character'd in my brow,  
The story of sweet chastity's decay,  
The impious breach of holy wedlock vow:  
Yea, the illiterate, that know not how  
To cipher what is writ in learned books,  
Will quote my loathsome trespass in my looks.

"The nurse, to still her child, will tell my story,  
And fright her crying babe with Tarquin's name;  
The orator, to deck his oratory,  
Will couple my reproach to Tarquin's shame;  
Feast-finding minstrels, tuning my defame,  
Will tie the hearers to attend each line,  
How Tarquin wronged me, I Collatine.

"Let my good name, that senseless reputation,  
For Collatine's dear love be kept unspotted:  
If that be made a theme for disputation,  
The branches of another root are rotted,  
And undeserved reproach to him allotted  
That is as clear from this attain of mine  
As I, ere this, was pure to Collatine.

"O unseen shame! invisible disgrace!  
O unfelt sore! crest-wounding, private scar!  
Reproach is stamp'd in Collatinus' face,  
And Tarquin's eye may read the mot afar,

How he in peace is wounded, not in war.

Alas, how many bear such shameful blows,  
Which not themselves, but he that gives them knows!

“If, Collatine, thine honour lay in me,  
From me by strong assault it is bereft.  
My honey lost, and I, a drone-like bee,  
Have no perfection of my summer left,  
But robb’d and ransack’d by injurious theft:  
In thy weak hive a wandering wasp hath crept,  
And suck’d the honey which thy chaste bee kept.

“Yet am I guilty of thy honour’s wrack;  
Yet for thy honour did I entertain him;  
Coming from thee, I could not put him back,  
For it had been dishonour to disdain him:  
Besides, of weariness he did complain him,  
And talk’d of virtue: O unlook’d-for evil,  
When virtue is profaned in such a devil!

“Why should the worm intrude the maiden bud?  
Or hateful cuckoos hatch in sparrows’ nests?  
Or toads infect fair founts with venom mud?  
Or tyrant folly lurk in gentle breasts?  
Or kings be breakers of their own behests?  
But no perfection is so absolute,  
That some impurity doth not pollute.

“The aged man that coffers-up his gold  
Is plagued with cramps and gouts and painful fits;  
And scarce hath eyes his treasure to behold,  
But like still-pining Tantalus he sits,  
And useless barns the harvest of his wits;  
Having no other pleasure of his gain  
But torment that it cannot cure his pain.

"So then he hath it when he cannot use it,  
And leaves it to be master'd by his young;  
Who in their pride do presently abuse it:  
Their father was too weak, and they too strong,  
To hold their cursed-blessed fortune long.

The sweets we wish for turn to loathed sours  
Even in the moment that we call them ours.

"Unruly blasts wait on the tender spring;  
Unwholesome weeds take root with precious flowers:  
The adder hisses where the sweet birds sing;  
What virtue breeds iniquity devours:  
We have no good that we can say is ours,  
But ill-annexed Opportunity  
Or kills his life or else his quality.

"O Opportunity, thy guilt is great!  
'T is thou that executest the traitor's treason:  
Thou set'st the wolf where he the lamb may get;  
Whoever plots the sin, thou 'point'st the season;  
'T is thou that spurn'st at right, at law, at reason;  
And in thy shady cell, where none may spy him,  
Sits Sin, to seize the souls that wander by him.

"Thou makest the vestal violate her oath;  
Thou blow'st the fire when temperance is thaw'd;  
Thou smother'st honesty, thou murder'st troth;  
Thou foul abettor! thou notorious bawd!  
Thou plantest scandal and displacest laud:  
Thou ravisher, thou traitor, thou false thief,  
Thy honey turns to gall, thy joy to grief!

"Thy secret pleasure turns to open shame,  
Thy private feasting to a public fast,  
Thy smoothing titles to a ragged name,  
Thy sugar'd tongue to bitter wormwood taste:

Thy violent vanities can never last.

How comes it then, vile Opportunity

Being so bad, such numbers seek for thee?

“When wilt thou be the humble suppliant’s friend,

And bring him where his suit may be obtain’d?

When wilt thou sort an hour great strifes to end?

Or free that soul which wretchedness hath chain’d?

Give physic to the sick, ease to the pain’d?

The poor, lame, blind, halt, creep, cry out for thee;

But they ne’er meet with Opportunity.

“The patient dies while the physician sleeps;

The orphan pines while the oppressor feeds;

Justice is feasting while the widow weeps;

Advice is sporting while infection breeds:

Thou grant’st no time for charitable deeds:

Wrath, envy, treason, rape, and murder’s rages,

Thy heinous hours wait on them as their pages.

When Truth and Virtue have to do with thee,

A thousand crosses keep them from thy aid:

They buy thy help; but Sin ne’er gives a fee,

He gratis comes; and thou art well appaid

As well to hear as grant what he hath said.

My Collatine would else have come to me

When Tarquin did, but he was stay’d by thee.

“Guilty thou art of murder and of theft,

Guilty of perjury and subornation,

Guilty of treason, forgery, and shift,

Guilty of incest, that abomination:

An accessory by thine inclination

To all sins past, and all that are to come,

From the creation to the general doom.



“Mis-shapen Time, copesmate of ugly Night,  
Swift subtle post, carrier of grisly care,  
Eater of youth, false slave to false delight,  
Base watch of woes, sin’s pack-horse, virtue’s snar  
Thou nursest all and murder’st all that are:  
O, hear me then, injurious, shifting Time!  
Be guilty of my death, since of my crime.

“Why hath thy servant, Opportunity,  
Betray’d the hours thou gavest me to repose,  
Cancell’d my fortunes, and enchained me  
To endless date of never-ending woes?  
Time’s office is to fine the hate of foes;  
To eat up errors by opinion bred,  
Not spend the dowry of a lawful bed.

“Time’s glory is to calm contending kings,  
To unmask falsehood and bring truth to li;  
To stamp the seal of time in aged things,  
To wake the morn and sentinel the night,  
To wrong the wronger till he render right,  
To ruinate proud buildings with thy hours,  
And smear with dust their glittering golden towers;

“To fill with worm-holes stately monuments,  
To feed oblivion with decay of things,  
To blot old books and alter their contents,  
To pluck the quills from ancient ravens’ wings,  
To dry the old oak’s sap and cherish springs,  
To spoil antiquities of hammer’d steel,  
And turn the giddy round of Fortune’s wheel;

“To show the beldam daughters of her daughter,  
To make the child a man, the man a child,  
To slay the tiger that doth live by slaughter,  
To tame the unicorn and lion wild,

To mock the subtle in themselves beguiled,  
To cheer the ploughman with increaseful crops,  
And waste huge stones with little water-drops.

“Why work'st thou mischief in thy pilgrimage,  
Unless thou couldst return to make amends?  
One poor retiring minute in an age  
Would purchase thee a thousand thousand friends,  
Lending him wit that to bad debtors lends:  
O, this dread night, wouldst thou one hour come  
back,  
I could prevent this storm and shun thy wrack!

“Thou ceaseless lackey to eternity,  
With some mischance cross Tarquin in his flight:  
Devise extremes beyond extremity,  
To make him curse this cursed crimeful night:  
Let ghastly shadows his lewd eyes affright;  
And the dire thought of his committed evil  
Shape every bush a hideous shapeless devil.

“Disturb his hours of rest with restless trances,  
Afflict him in his bed with bedrid groans;  
Let there bechance him pitiful mischances,  
To make him moan; but pity not his moans:  
Stone him with harden'd hearts, harder than stones.  
And let mild women to him lose their mildness,  
Wilder to him than tigers in their wildness.

“Let him have time to tear his curled hair,  
Let him have time against himself to rave,  
Let him have time of Time's help to despair,  
Let him have time to live a loathed slave,  
Let him have time a beggar's orts to crave,  
And time to see one that by alms doth live  
Disdain to him disdained scraps to give.

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Let him have time a beggar's orts to crave,  
And time to see one that by alms doth live  
Disdain to him disdained scraps to give.



To trembling clients be you mediators:  
For me, I force not argument a straw,  
Since that my case is past the help of law.

“In vain I rail at Opportunity,  
At Time, at Tarquin, and uncheerful Night;  
In vain I cavil with mine infamy,  
In vain I spurn at my confirm’d despite:  
This helpless smoke of words doth me no right.  
The remedy indeed to do me good  
Is to let forth my foul-defiled blood.

“Poor hand, why quiver’st thou at this decree  
Honour thyself to rid me of this shame;  
For if I die, my honour lives in thee;  
But if I live, thou livest in my defame:  
Since thou couldst not defend thy loyal dame,  
And wast afraid to scratch her wicked foe,  
Kill both thyself and her for yielding so.”

This said, from her be-tumbled couch she starteth,  
To find some desperate instrument of death:  
But this no slaughterhouse no tool imparteth  
To make more vent for passage of her breath:  
Which, thronging through her lips, so vanisheth  
As smoke from Ætna, that in air consumes,  
Or that which from discharged cannon fumes.

“In vain”, quoth she, “I live, and seek in vain  
Some happy mean to end a hapless life.  
I fear’d by Tarquin’s falchion to be slain,  
Yet for the self-same purpose seek a knife:  
But when I fear’d I was a loyal wife  
So am I now: O no, that cannot be.  
Of that true type hath Tarquin riled me.



Lends light to all fair eyes that light will borrow:  
But cloudy Lucrece shames herself to see,  
And therefore still in night would cloister'd be.

Revealing day through every cranny spies,  
And seems to point her out where she sits weeping;  
To whom she sobbing speaks: "O eye of eyes,  
Why pry'st thou through my window? leave thy peep  
ing:  
Mock with thy tickling beams eyes that are sleeping:  
Brand not my forehead with thy piercing light,  
For day hath nought to do what's done by night".

Thus cavils she with every thing she sees:  
True grief is fond and testy as a child,  
Who wayward once, his mood with nought agrees:  
Old woes, not infant sorrows, bear them mild;  
Continuance tames the one; the other wild,  
Like an unpractised swimmer plunging still,  
With too much labour drowns for want of skill.

So she, deep-drenched in a sea of care,  
Holds disputation with each thing she views,  
And to herself all sorrow doth compare;  
No object but her passion's strength renews;  
And as one shifts, another straight ensues:  
Sometime her grief is dumb and hath no words:  
Sometime 't is mad and too much talk affords.

The little birds that tune their morning's joy  
Make her moans mad with their sweet melody:  
For mirth doth search the bottom of annoy;  
Sad souls are slain in merry company:  
Grief best is pleased with grief's society:  
True sorrow then is feelingly sufficed  
When with like semblance it is sympathized.



"O, that is gone for which I sought to live,  
And therefore now I need not fear to die.  
To clear this spot by death, at least I give  
A badge of fame to slander's livery;  
A dying life to living infamy:  
    Poor helpless help, the treasure's stol'n away,  
    To burn the guiltless casket where it lay!

"Well, well, dear Collatine, thou shalt not know  
The stained taste of violated troth;  
I will not wrong thy true affection so,  
To flatter thee with an infringed oath;  
This bastard graff shall never come to growth:  
    He shall not boast who did thy stock pollute  
    That thou art doting father of his fruit.

"Nor shall he smile at thee in secret thought,  
Nor laugh with his companions at thy state:  
But thou shalt know thy interest was not bought  
Basely with gold, but stol'n from forth thy gate.  
For me, I am the mistress of my fate,  
    And with my trespass never will dispense,  
    Till life to death acquit my forced offence.

"I will not poison thee with my attaint,  
Nor fold my fault in cleanly-coin'd excuses;  
My sable ground of sin I will not paint,  
To hide the truth of this false night's abuses:  
My tongue shall utter all; mine eyes, like sluices,  
    As from a mountain-spring that feeds a dale  
    Shall gush pure streams to purge my impure tale."

By this, lamenting Philomel had ended  
The well-tuned warble of her nightly sorrow,  
And solemn night with slow sad gait descended  
To ugly hell; when, lo, the blushing morrow

ends light to all fair eyes that light will borrow :  
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And therefore still in night would cloister'd be.

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Will we find out; and there we will unfold  
To creatures stern sad tunes, to change their kinds:  
Since men prove beasts, let beasts bear gentle  
minds."

As the poor frightened deer, that stands at gaze,  
Wildly determining which way to fly,  
Or one encompass'd with a winding maze,  
That cannot tread the way out readily;  
So with herself is she in mutiny,  
To live or die which of the twain were better,  
When life is shamed, and death reproach's debtor.

"To kill myself," quoth she, "alack, what were it,  
But with my body my poor soul's pollution?  
They that lose half with greater patience bear it  
Than they whose whole is swallow'd in confusion.  
That mother tries a merciless conclusion  
Who, having two sweet babes, when death takes  
one,  
Will slay the other and be nurse to none.

"My body or my soul, which was the dearer,  
When the one pure, the other made divine?  
Whose love of either to myself was nearer,  
When both were kept for heaven and Collatine?  
Ay me! the bark peel'd from the lofty pine,  
His leaves will wither and his sap decay;  
So must my soul, her bark being peel'd away.

Her house is sack'd, her quiet interrupted,  
Her mansion batter'd by the enemy;  
Her sacred temple spotted, spoil'd, corrupted  
Grossly engirt with daring infamy:  
Then let it not be call'd impiety,  
If in this blemish'd fort I make some hole  
Through which I may convey this troubled soul.



Faint not, faint heart, but stoutly say 'So be it':  
Yield to my hand; my hand shall conquer thee:  
Thou dead, both die, and both shall victors be."

This plot of death when sadly she had laid,  
And wiped the brinish pearl from her bright eyes,  
With untuned tongue she hoarsely calls her maid,  
Whose swift obedience to her mistress hies;  
For fleet-wing'd duty with thought's feathers flies.  
Poor Lucrece' cheeks unto her maid seem so  
As winter meads when sun doth melt their snow.

Her mistress she doth give demure good-morrow,  
With soft-slow tongue, true mark of modesty,  
And sorts a sad look to her lady's sorrow,  
For why her face wore sorrow's livery;  
But durst not ask of her audaciously  
Why her two suns were cloud-eclipsed so,  
Nor why her fair cheeks over-wash'd with woe.

But as the earth doth weep, the sun being set,  
Each flower moisten'd like a melting eye;  
Even so the maid with swelling drops gan wet  
Her circled cyne, enforced by sympathy  
Of those fair suns set in her mistress' sky,  
Who in a salt-waved ocean quench their light,  
Which makes the maid weep like the dewy night.

A pretty while these pretty creatures stand,  
Like ivory conduits coral cisterns filling:  
One justly weeps; the other takes in hand  
No cause, but company, of her drops spilling:  
Their gentle sex to weep are often willing;  
Grieving themselves to guess at others' smarts,  
And then they drown their eyes or break their hearts

For men have marble, women waxen, minds,  
 And therefore are they form'd as marble will;  
 The weak oppress'd, the impression of strange kinds  
 Is form'd in them by force, by fraud, or skill:  
 Then call them not the authors of their ill,  
     No more than wax shall be accounted evil  
     Wherein is stamp'd the semblance of a devil.

Their smoothness, like a goodly champaign plain,  
 Lays open all the little worms that creep;  
 In men, as in a rough-grown grove, remain  
 Cave-keeping evils that obscurely sleep:  
 Through crystal walls each little mote will peep:  
     Though men can cover crimes with bold stern looks,  
     Poor women's faces are their own faults' books.

No man inveigh against the wither'd flower,  
 But chide rough winter that the flower hath kill'd:  
 Not that devour'd, but that which doth devour,  
 Is worthy blame. O, let it not be hild  
 Poor women's faults, that they are so fulfill'd  
     With men's abuses: those proud lords, to blame,  
     Make weak-made women tenants to their shame.

The precedent whereof in Lucrece view,  
 Assail'd by night with circumstances strong  
 Of present death, and shame that might ensue  
 By that her death, to do her husband wrong:  
 Such danger to resistance did belong,  
     That dying fear through all her body spread;  
     And who cannot abuse a body dead?

By this, mild patience bid fair Lucrece speak  
 To the poor counterfeit of her complaining:  
 "My girl," quoth she, "on what occasion break  
 Those tears from thee, that down thy cheeks are ra  
     ing?

If thou dost weep for grief of my sustaining,  
Know, gentle wench, it small avails my mood:  
If tears could help, mine own would do me good.

"But tell me, girl, when went"—and there she stay'd  
Till after a deep groan—"Tarquin from hence?"

"Madam, ere I was up," replied the maid,  
"The more to blame my sluggard negligence:  
Yet with the fault I thus far can dispense;  
Myself was stirring ere the break of day,  
And, ere I rose, was Tarquin gone away.

"But, lady, if your maid may be so bold,  
She would request to know your heaviness."

"O, peace!" quoth Lucrece; "if it should be told,  
The repetition cannot make it less;  
For more it is than I can well express:  
And that deep torture may be call'd a hell  
When more is felt than one hath power to tell.

"Go, get me hither paper, ink, and pen:  
Yet save that labour, for I have them here.  
What should I say? One of my husband's men  
Bid thou be ready, by and by, to bear  
A letter to my lord, my love, my dear:  
Bid him with speed prepare to carry it.  
The cause craves haste, and it will soon be writ."

Her maid is gone, and she prepares to write,  
First hovering o'er the paper with her quill:  
Conceit and grief an eager combat fight;  
What wit sets down is blotted straight with will;  
This is too curious-good, this blunt and ill:  
Much like a press of people at a door,  
Throng her inventions, which shall go before.



ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

At last she thus begins: "Thou worthy lord  
Of that unworthy wife that greeteth thee,  
Health to thy person! next vouchsafe t' afford—  
If ever, love, thy Lucrece thou wilt see—  
Some present speed to come and visit me.  
So, I commend me from our house in grief:  
My woes are tedious, though my words are brief."

Here folds she up the tenour of her woe,  
Her certain sorrow writ uncertainly.  
By this short schedule Collatine may know  
Her grief, but not her grief's true quality:  
She dares not thereof make discovery,  
Lest he should hold it her own gross abuse,  
Ere she with blood had stain'd her stain'd excuse.

Besides, the life and feeling of her passion  
She hoards, to spend when he is by to hear her;  
When sighs and groans and tears may grace the fashion  
Of her disgrace, the better so to clear her  
From that suspicion which the world might bear her.  
To shun this blot, she would not blot the letter  
With words, till action might become them better.

To see sad sights moves more than hear them told;  
For then the eye interprets to the ear  
The heavy motion that it doth behold,  
When every part a part of woe doth bear.  
'T is but a part of sorrow that we hear:  
Deep sounds make lesser noise than shallow fords,  
And sorrow ebbs, being blown with wind of words.

Her letter now is seal'd, and on it writ  
"At Ardea to my lord with more than haste".  
The post attends, and she delivers it,  
Charging the sour-faced groom to hie as fast

As lagging fowls before the northern blast:  
Speed more than speed but dull and slow she deems:  
Extremity still urgeth such extremes.

The homely villain court'sies to her low;  
And, blushing on her, with a steadfast eye  
Receives the scroll without or yea or no,  
And forth with bashful innocence doth hie.  
But they whose guilt within their bosoms lie  
Imagine every eye beholds their blame;  
For Lucrece thought he blush'd to see her shame

When, silly groom! God wot, it was defect  
Of spirit, life, and bold audacity.  
Such harmless creatures have a true respect  
To talk in deeds, while others saucily  
Promise more speed, but do it leisurely:  
Even so this pattern of the worn-out age  
Pawn'd honest looks, but laid no words to gage.

His kindled duty kindled her mistrust,  
That two red fires in both their faces blazed;  
She thought he blush'd, as knowing Tarquin's lust  
And, blushing with him, wistly on him gazed;  
Her earnest eye did make him more amazed:  
The more she saw the blood his cheeks replenish,  
The more she thought he spied in her some blemish.

But long she thinks till he return again,  
And yet the duteous vassal scarce is gone.  
The weary time she cannot entertain,  
For now 't is stale to sigh, to weep, and groan:  
So woe hath wearied woe, moan tired moan,  
That she her plaints a little while doth stay,  
Pausing for means to mourn some newer way.

At last she calls to mind where hangs a piece  
Of skilful painting, made for Priam's Troy:  
Before the which is drawn the power of Greece,  
For Helen's rape the city to destroy,  
Threatening cloud-kissing Ilion with annoy;  
Which the conceited painter drew so proud,  
As heaven, it seem'd, to kiss the turrets bow'd.

A thousand lamentable objects there,  
In scorn of nature, art gave lifeless life:  
Many a dry drop seem'd a weeping tear,  
Shed for the slaughter'd husband by the wife:  
The red blood reek'd, to show the painter's strife;  
And dying eyes gleam'd forth their ashy lights,  
Like dying coals burnt out in tedious nights.

There might you see the labouring pioner  
Begrimed with sweat, and smeared all with dust:  
And from the towers of Troy there would appear  
The very eyes of men through loop-holes thrust,  
Gazing upon the Greeks with little lust:  
Such sweet observance in this work was had,  
That one might see those far-off eyes look sad.

In great commanders grace and majesty  
You might behold, triumphing in their faces;  
In youth, quick bearing and dexterity;  
And here and there the painter interlaces  
Pale cowards, marching on with trembling faces;  
Which heartless peasants did so well resemble,  
That one would swear he saw them quake and  
tremble.

In Ajax and Ulysses, O, what art  
Of physiognomy might one behold!  
The face of either cipher'd either's heart;  
Their face their manners most expressly told:

In Ajax' eyes blunt rage and rigour roll'd;  
But the mild glance that sly Ulysses lent  
Show'd deep regard and smiling government.

There pleading might you see grave Nestor stand,  
As 't were encouraging the Greeks to fight;  
Making such sober action with his hand,  
That it beguiled attention, charm'd the sight:  
In speech, it seem'd, his beard, all silver white,  
Wagg'd up and down, and from his lips did fly  
Thin winding breath, which purld up to the sky.

About him were a press of gaping faces,  
Which seem'd to swallow up his sound advice;  
All jointly listening, but with several graces,  
As if some mermaid did their ears entice,  
Some high, some low, the painter was so nice;  
The scalps of many, almost hid behind,  
To jump up higher seem'd, to mock the mind.

Here one man's hand lean'd on another's head,  
His nose being shadow'd by his neighbour's ear;  
Here one being throng'd bears back, all boll'n and red.  
Another smother'd seems to pelt and swear;  
And in their rage such signs of rage they bear,  
As, but for loss of Nestor's golden words,  
It seem'd they would debate with angry sword.

For much imaginary work was there.  
Conceit deceitful, so compact, so kind.  
That for Achilles' image stood his spear,  
Griped in an armed hand; himself, behind,  
Was left unseen, save to the eye of mind  
A hand, a foot, a face, a leg, a head,  
Stood for the whole to be imagined.

And from the walls of strong-besieged Troy  
When their brave hope, bold Hector, march'd to field,  
Stood many Trojan mothers, sharing joy  
To see their youthful sons bright weapons wield;  
And to their hope they such odd action yield,  
That through their light joy seemed to appear,  
Like bright things stain'd, a kind of heavy fear.

And from the strand of Dardan, where they fought,  
To Simois' reedy banks the red blood ran,  
Whose waves to imitate the battle sought  
With swelling ridges; and their ranks began  
To break upon the galled shore, and than  
Retire again, till, meeting greater ranks,  
They join and shoot their foam at Simois' banks.

To this well-painted piece is Lucrece come,  
To find a face where all distress is stell'd.  
Many she sees where cares have carved some,  
But none where all distress and dolour dwell'd,  
Till she despairing Hecuba beheld,  
Staring on Priam's wounds with her old eyes,  
Which bleeding under Pyrrhus' proud foot lies.

In her the painter had anatomized  
Time's ruin, beauty's wreck, and grim care's reign:  
Her cheeks with chaps and wrinkles were disguised;  
Of what she was no semblance did remain:  
Her blue blood changed to black in every vein,  
Wanting the spring that those shrunk pipes had fed,  
Show'd life imprison'd in a body dead.

On this sad shadow Lucrece spends her eyes,  
And shapes her sorrow to the beldam's woes,  
Who nothing wants to answer her but cries,  
And bitter words to ban her cruel foes:

The painter was no god to lend her those;  
And therefore Lucrece swears he did her wrong,  
To give her so much grief and not a tongue.

"Poor instrument," quoth she, "without a sound,  
I'll tune thy woes with my lamenting tongue;  
And drop sweet balm in Priam's painted wound,  
And rail on Pyrrhus that hath done him wrong:  
And with my tears quench Troy that burns so long;  
And with my knife scratch out the angry eyes  
Of all the Greeks that are thine enemies.

"Show me the strumpet that began this stir,  
That with my nails her beauty I may tear.  
Thy heat of lust, fond Paris, did incur  
This load of wrath that burning Troy doth bear:  
Thy eye kindled the fire that burneth here;  
And here in Troy, for trespass of thine eye,  
The sire, the son, the dame, and daughter die.

"Why should the private pleasure of some one  
Become the public plague of many more?  
Let sin, alone committed, light alone  
Upon his head that hath transgressed so:  
Let guiltless souls be freed from guilty woe:  
For one's offence why should so many fall,  
To plague a private sin in general?

"Lo, here weeps Hecuba, here Priam dies,  
Here manly Hector faints, here Troilus swoonds,  
Here friend by friend in bloody channel lies,  
And friend to friend gives unadvised wounds,  
And one man's lust these many lives confounds:  
Had doting Priam check'd his son's desire,  
Troy had been bright with fame and not with fire."



Of rich-built Ilion, that the skies were sorry,  
And little stars shot from their fixed places,  
When their glass fell wherein they view'd their faces.

This picture she advisedly perused,  
And chid the painter for his wondrous skill,  
Saying, some shape in Sinon's was abused;  
So fair a form lodged not a mind so ill:  
And still on him she gazed; and gazing still,  
Such signs of truth in his plain face she spied,  
That she concludes the picture was belied.

"It cannot be", quoth she, "that so much guile"—  
She would have said "can lurk in such a look";  
But Tarquin's shape came in her mind the while,  
And from her tongue "can lurk" from "cannot" took:  
"It cannot be" she in that sense forsook,  
And turn'd it thus, "It cannot be, I find,  
But such a face should bear a wicked mind:

"For even as subtle Sinon here is painted,  
So sober-sad, so weary, and so mild,  
As if with grief or travail he had fainted,  
To me came Tarquin armed; so beguiled  
With outward honesty, but yet defiled  
With inward vice: as Priam him did cherish,  
So did I Tarquin; so my Troy did perish.

"Look, look, how listening Priam wets his eyes,  
To see those borrow'd tears that Sinon sheds!  
Priam, why art thou old and yet not wise?  
For every tear he falls a Trojan bleeds:  
His eye drops fire, no water thence proceeds;  
Those round clear pearls of his, that move thy pity,  
Are balls of quenchless fire to burn thy city.



ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

uch devils steal effects from lightless hell;  
For Sinon in his fire doth quake with cold,  
And in that cold hot-burning fire doth dwell;  
These contraries such unity do hold,  
Only to flatter fools and make them bold:  
So Priam's trust false Sinon's tears doth flatter,  
That he finds means to burn his Troy with water."

Here, all enraged, such passion her assails,  
That patience is quite beaten from her breast.  
She tears the senseless Sinon with her nails,  
Comparing him to that unhappy guest  
Whose deed hath made herself herself detest:  
At last she smilingly with this gives o'er;  
"Fool, fool!" quoth she, "his wounds will not be  
sore."

Thus ebbs and flows the current of her sorrow,  
And time doth weary time with her complaining.  
She looks for night, and then she longs for morrow,  
And both she thinks too long with her remaining:  
Short time seems long in sorrow's sharp sustaining:  
Though woe be heavy, yet it seldom sleeps;  
And they that watch see time how slow it creeps.

Which all this time hath overslipp'd her thought,  
That she with painted images hath spent;  
Being from the feeling of her own grief brought  
By deep surmise of others' detriment;  
Losing her woes in shows of discontent.  
It easeth some, though none it ever cured,  
To think their dolour others have endured.

But now the mindful messenger, come back,  
Brings home his lord and other company;  
Who finds his Lucrece clad in mourning black:  
And round about her tear-distained eye

Blue circles stream'd, like rainbows in the sky:  
These water-galls in her dim element  
Foretell new storms to those already spent.

Which when her sad-beholding husband saw,  
Amazedly in her sad face he stares:  
Her eyes, though sod in tears, look'd red and raw,  
Her lively colour kill'd with deadly cares.  
He hath no power to ask her how she fares:  
Both stood, like old acquaintance in a trance,  
Met far from home, wondering each other's chance

At last he takes her by the bloodless hand,  
And thus begins: "What uncouth ill event  
Hath thee befall'n, that thou dost trembling stand?  
Sweet love, what spite hath thy fair colour spent?  
Why art thou thus attired in discontent?  
Unmask, dear dear, this moody heaviness,  
And tell thy grief, that we may give redress."

Three times with sighs she gives her sorrow fire,  
Ere once she can discharge one word of woe:  
At length address'd to answer his desire,  
She modestly prepares to let them know  
Her honour is ta'en prisoner by the foe;  
While Collatine and his consorted lords  
With sad attention long to hear her words.

And now this pale swan in her watery nest  
Begins the sad dirge of her certain ending.  
"Few words", quoth she, "shall fit the trespass best.  
Where no excuse can give the fault amending:  
In me moe woes than words are now depending:  
And my laments would be drawn out too long.  
To tell them all with one poor tired tongue.

ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

Then be this all the task it hath to say:  
Dear husband, in the interest of thy bed  
A stranger came, and on that pillow lay  
Where thou wast wont to rest thy weary head;  
And what wrong else may be imagined  
By foul enforcement might be done to me,  
From that, alas, thy Lucrece is not free.

“For in the dreadful dead of dark midnight,  
With shining falchion in my chamber came  
A creeping creature, with a flaming light,  
And softly cried ‘Awake, thou Roman dame,  
And entertain my love; else lasting shame  
On thee and thine this night I will inflict,  
If thou my love’s desire do contradict.

“‘For some hard-favour’d groom of thine,’ quoth he,  
‘Unless thou yoke thy liking to my will,  
I’ll murder straight, and then I’ll slaughter thee  
And swear I found you where you did fulfil  
The loathsome act of lust, and so did kill  
The lechers in their deed: this act will be  
My fame and thy perpetual infamy.’

“With this, I did begin to start and cry;  
And then against my heart he sets his sword,  
Swearing, unless I took all patiently,  
I should not live to speak another word;  
So should my shame still rest upon record,  
And never be forgot in mighty Rome  
Th’ adulterate death of Lucrece and her groom.

“Mine enemy was strong, my poor self weak,  
And far the weaker with so strong a fear:  
My bloody judge forbade my tongue to speak;  
No rightful plea might plead for justice there:

His scarlet lust came evidence to swear  
That my poor beauty had purloin'd his eyes;  
And when the judge is robb'd the prisoner dies.

"O, teach me how to make mine own excuse!  
Or at the least this refuge let me find;  
Though my gross blood be stain'd with this abuse,  
Immaculate and spotless is my mind;  
That was not forced; that never was inclined  
To accessary yieldings, but still pure  
Doth in her poison'd closet yet endure."

Lo, here, the hopeless merchant of this loss,  
With head declined, and voice damm'd up with woe  
With sad set eyes, and wretched arms across,  
From lips new-waxen pale begins to blow  
The grief away that stops his answer so:  
But, wretched as he is, he strives in vain;  
What he breathes out his breath drinks up again.

As through an arch the violent roaring tide  
Outruns the eye that doth behold his haste,  
Yet in the eddy boundeth in his pride  
Back to the strait that forced him on so fast;  
In rage sent out, recall'd in rage, being past:  
Even so his sighs, his sorrows, make a saw,  
To push grief on, and back the same grief draw

Which speechless woe of his poor she attendeth.  
And his untimely frenzy thus awaketh.  
"Dear lord, thy sorrow to my sorrow lendeth  
Another power; no flood by raining slaketh  
My woe too sensible thy passion maketh  
More feeling-painful: let it then suffice  
To drown one woe, one pair of weeping eyes.

ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

And for my sake, when I might charm thee so  
For she that was thy Lucrece, now attend me:  
Be suddenly revenged on my foe,  
Thine, mine, his own: suppose thou dost defend me  
From what is past: the help that thou shalt lend me  
Comes all too late, yet let the traitor die;  
For sparing justice feeds iniquity.

"But ere I name him, you fair lords," quoth she,  
Speaking to those that came with Collatine,  
"Shall plight your honourable faiths to me,  
With swift pursuit to venge this wrong of mine;  
For 't is a meritorious fair design  
To chase injustice with revengeful arms:  
Knights, by their oaths, should right poor ladies'  
harms."

At this request, with noble disposition  
Each present lord began to promise aid,  
As bound in knighthood to her imposition,  
Longing to hear the hateful foe bewray'd.  
But she, that yet her sad task hath not said,  
The protestation stops. "O, speak," quoth she,  
"How may this forced stain be wiped from me?"

"What is the quality of mine offence,  
Being constrain'd with dreadful circumstance?  
May my pure mind with the foul act dispense,  
My low declined honour to advance?  
May any terms acquit me from this chance?  
'The poison'd fountain clears itself again;  
And why not I from this compelled stain?"

With this, they all at once began to say,  
Her body's stain her mind untainted clears;  
While with a joyless smile she turns away  
The face, that map which deep impression bears

Of hard misfortune, carved in it with tears.

"No, no," quoth she, "no dame, hereafter living.

By my excuse shall claim excuse's giving."

Here with a sigh, as if her heart would break,

She throws forth Tarquin's name: "He, he," she says,

But more than "he" her poor tongue could not speak:

Till after many accents and delays,

Untimely breathings, sick and short assays,

She utters this, "He, he, fair lords, 'tis he,

That guides this hand to give this wound to me."

Even here she sheathed in her harmless breast

A harmful knife, that thence her soul unsheathed:

That blow did bail it from the deep unrest

Of that polluted prison where it breathed:

Her contrite sighs unto the clouds bequeathed

Her winged sprite, and through her wounds doth fly

Life's lasting date from cancell'd destiny

Stone-still, astonish'd with this deadly deed,

Stood Collatine and all his lordly crew,

Till Lucrece' father, that beholds her blood,

Himself on her self-slaughter'd body throw

And from the purple fountain Brutus drew

The murderous knife, and, as it fell the place,

Her blood, in poor revenge, held her chase.

And bubbling from her breast, and thence divide

In two slow rivers, that the eyes should

Circles her body in on every side

Who, like a late-sack'd isle, stood

Bare and unpeopled in this terrible flood

Some of her blood still upon her red remain'd.

And some look'd that stain'd that false Tarquin

stain'd

About the mourning and congealed face  
Of that black blood a watery rigol goes,  
Which seems to weep upon the tainted place:  
And ever since, as pitying Lucrece' woes,  
Corrupted blood some watery token shows;  
And blood untainted still doth red abide,  
Blushing at that which is so putrified.

"Daughter, dear daughter," old Lucretius cries,  
"That life was mine which thou hast here deprived.  
If in the child the father's image lies,  
Where shall I live now Lucrece is unliv'd?  
Thou wast not to this end from me derived.  
If children pre-decease progenitors,  
We are their offspring, and they none of ours.

"Poor broken glass, I often did behold  
In thy sweet semblance my old age new born;  
But now that fair fresh mirror, dim and old,  
Shows me a bare-boned death by time outworn:  
O, from thy cheeks my image thou has torn,  
And shiver'd all the beauty of my glass,  
That I no more can see what once I was!

"O time, cease thou thy course and last no longer,  
If they surcease to be that should survive.  
Shall rotten death make conquest of the stronger  
And leave the faltering feeble souls alive?  
The old bees die, the young possess their hive:  
Then live, sweet Lucrece, live again and see  
Thy father die, and not thy father thee!"

By this, starts Collatine as from a dream,  
And bids Lucretius give his sorrow place:  
And then in key-cold Lucrece' bleeding stream  
He falls, and bathes the pale fear in his face,

And counterfeits to die with her a space;  
Till manly shame bids him possess his breath  
And live to be revenged on her death.

The deep vexation of his inward soul  
Hath served a dumb arrest upon his tongue;  
Who, mad that sorrow should his use control,  
Or keep him from heart-easing words so long,  
Begins to talk; but through his lips do throng  
Weak words, so thick come in his poor heart's aid,  
That no man could distinguish what he said

Yet sometime "Tarquin" was pronounced plain,  
But through his teeth, as if the name he tore.  
This windy tempest, till it blow up rain,  
Held back his sorrow's tide, to make it more;  
At last it rains, and busy winds give o'er:  
Then son and father weep with equal strife  
Who should weep most, for daughter or for wife.

The one doth call her his, the other his,  
Yet neither may possess the claim they lay.  
The father says "She's mine". "O, mine she is,"  
Replies her husband: "do not take away  
My sorrow's interest: let no mourner say  
He weeps for her, for she was only mine,  
And only must be wail'd by Collatine."

"O," quoth Lucretius, "I did give that life  
Which she too early and too late hath spill'd."  
"Woe, woe," quoth Collatine, "she was my wife,  
I owed her, and 't is mine that she hath kill'd."  
"My daughter" and "my wife" with clamours fill'd  
The dispersed air, who, holding Lucrece' life.  
Answer'd their cries, "my daughter" and "my wife".



Brutus, who pluck'd the knife from Lucrece' side,  
Seeing such emulation in their woe,  
Began to clothe his wit in state and pride,  
Burying in Lucrece' wound his folly's show.  
He with the Romans was esteemed so  
As silly-jeering idiots are with kings,  
For sportive words and uttering foolish things:

But now he throws that shallow habit by,  
Wherein deep policy did him disguise;  
And arm'd his long-hid wits advisedly,  
To check the tears in Collatinus' eyes.  
"Thou wronged lord of Rome," quoth he, "arise:  
Let my unsounded self, supposed a fool,  
Now set thy long-experienced wit to school.

"Why, Collatine, is woe the cure for woe?  
Do wounds help wounds, or grief help grievous deeds?  
Is it revenge to give thyself a blow  
For his foul act by whom thy fair wife bleeds?  
Such childish humour from weak minds proceeds:  
Thy wretched wife mistook the matter so,  
To slay herself, that should have slain her foe.

"Courageous Roman, do not steep thy heart  
In such relenting dew of lamentations;  
But kneel with me and help to bear thy part,  
To rouse our Roman gods with invocations,  
That they will suffer these abominations,  
Since Rome herself in them doth stand disgraced,  
By our strong arms from forth her fair streets chase"

"Now, by the Capitol that we adore,  
And by this chaste blood so unjustly stain'd,  
By heaven's fair sun that breeds the fat earth's stor.  
By all our country rights in Rome maintain'd,

And by chaste Lucrece' soul that late complain'd  
 Her wrongs to us, and by this bloody knife,  
 We will revenge the death of this true wife."

This said, he struck his hand upon his breast,  
 And kiss'd the fatal knife, to end his vow:  
 And to his protestation urged the rest,  
 Who, wondering at him, did his words allow:  
 Then jointly to the ground their knees they bow:  
 And that deep vow, which Brutus made before,  
 He doth again repeat, and that they swore.

When they had sworn to this advised doom,  
 They did conclude to bear dead Lucrece thence;  
 To show her bleeding body thorough Rome,  
 And so to publish Tarquin's foul offence:  
 Which being done with speedy diligence,  
 The Romans plausibly did give consent  
 To Tarquin's everlasting banishment.

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## JOHN DRYDEN

(1637-1700)

### VII. CYMON AND IPHIGENIA

From *Bacchae*

IN that sweet isle, where Venus keeps her court  
 And every grace, and all the loves, resort:  
 Where either sex is formed of softer earth,  
 And takes the bent of pleasure from their birth:  
 There lived a Cyprian lord, above the rest  
 Wise, wealthy, with a numerous issue blest.

But, as no gift of fortune is sincere,  
 Was only wanting in a worthy heir:



His quarter-staff, which he could ne'er forsake,  
Hung half before and half behind his back.  
He trudged along, unknowing what he sought,  
And whistled as he went, for want of thought.

By chance conducted, or by thirst constrained,  
The deep recesses of the grove he gained;  
Where, in a plain defended by the wood,  
Crept through the matted grass a crystal flood,  
By which an alabaster fountain stood:  
And on the margin of the fount was laid,  
Attended by her slaves, a sleeping maid;  
Like Dian and her nymphs, when, tired with sport,  
To rest by cool Eurotas they resort.  
The dame herself the goddess well expressed,  
Not more distinguished by her purple vest  
Than by the charming features of her face,  
And, even in slumber, a superior grace:  
Her comely limbs composed with decent care,  
Her body shaded with a slight cymarr;  
Her bosom to the view was only bare;  
Where two beginning paps were scarcely spied,  
For yet their places were but signified:  
The fanning wind upon her bosom blows,  
To meet the fanning wind the bosom rose;  
The fanning wind and purling streams continue her repose

The fool of nature stood with stupid eyes,  
And gaping mouth, that testified surprise,  
Fixed on her face, nor could remove his sight,  
New as he was to love, and novice in delight:  
Long mute he stood, and leaning on his staff,  
His wonder witnessed with an idiot laugh:  
Then would have spoke, but by his glimmering sense  
First found his want of words, and feared offence:



On several parts a several praise bestows,  
The ruby lips, the well-proportioned nose,  
The snowy skin, the raven-glossy hair,  
The dimpled cheek, the forehead rising fair,  
And even in sleep itself a smiling air.  
From thence his eyes descending viewed the rest,  
Her plump round arms, white hands, and heaving breast.  
Long on the last he dwelt, though every part  
A pointed arrow sped to pierce his heart.

Thus in a trice a judge of beauty grown  
(A judge erected from a country clown),  
He longed to see her eyes in slumber hid,  
And wished his own could pierce within the lid.  
He would have waked her, but restrained his thought,  
And love new-born the first good manners taught.  
An awful fear his ardent wish withstood,  
Nor durst disturb the goddess of the wood;  
For such she seemed by her celestial face,  
Excelling all the rest of human race;  
And things divine, by common sense he knew  
Must be devoutly seen at distant view:  
So checking his desire, with trembling heart  
Gazing he stood, nor would nor could depart;  
Fixed as a pilgrim wildered in his way,  
Who dares not stir by night, for fear to stray;  
But stands with awful eyes to watch the dawn of day

At length awaking, Iphigene the fair  
(So was the beauty called who caused his care)  
Unclosed her eyes, and double day revealed,  
While those of all her slaves in sleep were sealed.

The slaving cudden, propped upon his staff,  
Stood ready gaping with a grinning laugh,

To welcome her awake, nor durst begin  
To speak, but wisely kept the fool within.  
Then she: "What make you, Cymon, here alone?"  
(For Cymon's name was round the country known,  
Because descended of a noble race,  
And for a soul ill sorted with his face.)

But still the sot stood silent with surprise,  
With fixed regard on her new opened eyes,  
And in his breast received the envenomed dart,  
A tickling pain that pleased amid the smart.  
But conscious of her form, with quick distrust  
She saw his sparkling eyes, and feared his brutal lust.  
This to prevent, she waked her sleepy crew,  
And rising hasty took a short adieu.

Then Cymon first his rustic voice essayed,  
With proffered service to the parting maid  
To see her safe; his hand she long denied,  
But took at length, ashamed of such a guide.  
So Cymon led her home, and leaving there,  
No more would to his country clowns repair,  
But sought his father's house, with better mind,  
Refusing in the farm to be confined.

The father wondered at the son's return,  
And knew not whether to rejoice or mourn;  
But doubtfully received, expecting still  
To learn the secret causes of his altered will.  
Nor was he long delayed the first request  
He made, was like his brothers to be dressed,  
And, as his birth required, above the rest.

With ease his suit was granted by his sire,  
Distinguishing his heir by rich attire  
His body thus adorned, he next designed  
With liberal arts to cultivate his mind,

He sought a tutor of his own accord,  
And studied lessons he before abhorred.

Thus the man-child advanced, and learned so fast,  
That in short time his equals he surpassed;  
His brutal manners from his breast exiled,  
His mien he fashioned, and his tongue he filed;  
In every exercise of all admired,  
He seemed, nor only seemed, but was inspired:  
Inspired by love, whose business is to please;  
He rode, he fenced, he moved with graceful ease,  
More famed for sense, for courtly carriage more,  
Than for his brutal folly known before.

What then of altered Cymon shall we say,  
But that the fire which choked in ashes lay,  
A load too heavy for his soul to move,  
Was upward blown below, and brushed away by love?  
Love made an active progress through his mind,  
The dusky parts he cleared, the gross refined,  
The drowsy waked; and, as he went, impressed  
The Maker's image on the human breast.  
Thus was the man amended by desire,  
And, though he loved perhaps with too much fire,  
His father all his faults with reason scanned,  
And liked an error of the better hand;  
Excused the excess of passion in his mind,  
By flames too fierce, perhaps too much refined:  
So Cymon, since his sire indulged his will,  
Impetuous loved, and would be Cymon still;  
Galesus he disowned, and chose to bear  
The name of fool, confirmed and bishoped by the fair.

To Cipseus by his friends his suit he moved,  
Cipseus the father of the fair he loved;





Thus warned, the Rhodians for the fight provide :  
Already were the vessels side by side,  
These obstinate to save, and those to seize the bride.  
But Cymon soon his crooked grapples cast,  
Which with tenacious hold his foes embraced.  
And, armed with sword and shield, amid the press he  
passed.

Fierce was the fight, but hastening to his prey,  
By force the furious lover freed his way ;  
Himself alone dispersed the Rhodian crew ;  
The weak disdained, the valiant overthrew ;  
Cheap conquest for his following friends remained,  
He reaped the field, and they but only gleaned.

His victory confessed, the foes retreat,  
And cast their weapons at the victor's feet.  
Whom thus he cheered: "O Rhodian youth, I fought  
For love alone, nor other booty sought ;  
Your lives are safe ; your vessel I resign,  
Yours be your own, restoring what is mine ;  
In Iphigene I claim my rightful due,  
Robbed by my rival, and detained by you :  
Your Pasimond a lawless bargain drove,  
The parent could not sell the daughter's love ;  
Or if he could, my love disdains the laws,  
And like a king by conquest gains his cause :  
Where arms take place, all other pleas are vain :  
Love taught me force, and force shall love maintain.  
You, what by strength you could not keep, release,  
And at an easy ransom buy your peace."

Fear on the conquered side soon signed the accord,  
And Iphigene to Cymon was restored.  
While to his arms the blushing bride he took,  
To seeming sadness she composed her look :

as if by force subjected to his will,  
 Though pleased, dissembling, and a woman still.  
 And, for she wept, he wiped her falling tears,  
 And prayed her to dismiss her empty fears;  
 "For yours I am," he said, "and have deserved  
 Your love much better, whom so long I served,  
 Than he to whom your formal father tied  
 Your vows, and sold a slave, not sent a bride".  
 Thus while he spoke, he seized the willing prey,  
 As Paris bore the Spartan spouse away.  
 Faintly she screamed, and even her eyes confessed  
 She rather would be thought, than was, distressed.

Who now exults but Cymon in his mind?  
 Vain hopes and empty joys of human kind,  
 Proud of the present, to the future blind!  
 Secure of fate, while Cymon ploughs the sea,  
 And steers to Candy with his conquered prey,  
 Scarce the third glass of measured hours was run,  
 When like a fiery meteor sunk the sun,  
 The promise of a storm; the shifting gales  
 Forsake by fits and fill the flagging sails;  
 Hoarse murmurs of the main from far were heard,  
 And night came on, not by degrees prepared,  
 But all at once; at once the winds arise,  
 The thunders roll, the forky lightning flies.  
 In vain the master issues out commands,  
 In vain the trembling sailors ply their hands;  
 The tempest unforeseen prevents their care,  
 And from the first they labour in despair.  
 The giddy ship betwixt the winds and tides,  
 Forced back and forwards, in a circle rides,  
 Stunned with the different blows; then shoots amain,  
 Till counterbuffed she stops, and sleeps again.  
 Not more aghast the proud archangel fell,

Plunged from the height of heaven to deepest hell,  
 Than stood the lover of his love possessed,  
 Now cursed the more, the more he had been blessed;  
 More anxious for her danger than his own,  
 Death he defies, but would be lost alone.

Sad Iphigene to womanish complaints  
 Adds pious prayers, and wearies all the saints;  
 Even if she could, her love she would repent,  
 But since she cannot, dreads the punishment:  
 Her forfeit faith and Pasimond betrayed  
 Are ever present, and her crime upbraid.  
 She blames herself, nor blames her lover less;  
 Augments her anger as her fears increase.  
 From her own back the burden would remove,  
 And lays the load on his ungoverned love,  
 Which interposing durst, in Heaven's despite,  
 Invade and violate another's right:  
 The Powers incensed awhile deferred his pain,  
 And made him master of his vows in vain  
 But soon they punished his presumptuous pride,  
 That for his daring enterprise she died,  
 Who rather not resisted than complied!

Then, impotent of mind, with altered sense  
 She hugged the offender, and forgot her wrongs,  
 Sex to the last. Meantime with sails full spread  
 The wandering vessel drove before the wind,  
 Tossed and retossed, aloft, and down,  
 Nor port they seek, nor certain way to know,  
 But every moment wait the fatal blow.  
 Thus blindly driven, by breakers round surrounded  
 The land before them, and the rocks exposed;  
 The land was welcome, but the rocks were more  
 The threatened ship against a rock was tore.

A winding bay was near; to this they bent,  
And just escaped; their force already spent.  
Secure from storms, and panting from the sea,  
The land unknown at leisure they survey;  
And saw (but soon their sickly sight withdrew)  
The rising towers of Rhodes at distant view;  
And cursed the hostile shore of Pasimond,  
Saved from the seas, and shipwrecked on the ground.

The frightened sailors tried their strength in vain  
To turn the stern, and tempt the stormy main;  
But the stiff wind withstood the labouring oar,  
And forced them forward on the fatal shore!  
The crooked keel now bites the Rhodian strand,  
And the ship moored constrains the crew to land:  
Yet still they might be safe, because unknown;  
But as ill fortune seldom comes alone,  
The vessel they dismissed was driven before,  
Already sheltered on their native shore;  
Known each, they know, but each with change of cheer;  
The vanquished side exults, the victors fear;  
Not them but theirs, made prisoners ere they fight,  
Despairing conquest, and deprived of flight.

The country rings around with loud alarms,  
And raw in fields the rude militia swarms;  
Mouths without hands; maintained at vast expense,  
In peace a charge, in war a weak defence;  
Stout once a month they march, a blustering band,  
And ever, but in times of need, at hand;  
This was the morn when, issuing on the guard,  
Drawn up in rank and file they stood prepared  
Of seeming arms to make a short essay,  
Then hasten to be drunk, the business of the day.

The cowards would have fled, but that they knew  
Themselves so many, and their foes so few;

But crowding on, the last the first impel,  
Till overborne with weight the Cyprians fell.  
Cymon enslaved, who first the war begun,  
And Iphigene once more is lost and won.

Deep in a dungeon was the captive cast,  
Deprived of day, and held in fetters fast;  
His life was only spared at their request,  
Whom taken he so nobly had released:  
But Iphigenia was the ladies' care,  
Each in their turn addressed to treat the fair;  
While Pasimond and his the nuptial feast prepare.

Her secret soul to Cymon was inclined,  
But she must suffer what her fates assigned;  
So passive is the church of womankind.  
What worse to Cymon could his fortune deal,  
Rolled to the lowest spoke of all her wheel?  
It rested to dismiss the downward weight,  
Or raise him upward to his former height;  
The latter pleased; and love (concerned the most)  
Prepared the amends for what by love he lost.

The sire of Pasimond had left a son,  
Though younger, yet for courage early known,  
Ormisda called, to whom, by promise tied,  
A Rhodian beauty was the destined bride;  
Cassandra was her name, above the rest  
Renowned for birth, with fortune amply blessed.  
Lysimachus, who ruled the Rhodian state,  
Was then by choice their annual magistrate:  
He loved Cassandra too with equal fire,  
But Fortune had not favoured his desire;  
Crossed by her friends, by her not disapproved,  
Nor yet preferred, or like Ormisda loved:

stood the affair: some little hope remained,  
that, should his rival chance to lose, he gained.

Meantime young Pasimond his marriage pressed,  
Ordained the nuptial day, prepared the feast;  
And frugally resolved (the charge to shun,  
Which would be double should he wed alone),  
To join his brother's bridal with his own.

Lysimachus, oppressed with mortal grief,  
Received the news, and studied quick relief:  
The fatal days approached; if force were used,  
The magistrate his public trust abused;  
To justice liable, as law required,  
For when his office ceased, his power expired:  
While power remained, the means were in his hand  
By force to seize, and then forsake the land:  
Betwixt extremes he knew not how to move,  
A slave to fame, but more a slave to love:  
Restraining others, yet himself not free,  
Made impotent by power, debased by dignity.  
Both sides he weighed: but after much debate,  
The man prevailed above the magistrate.

Love never fails to master what he finds,  
But works a different way in different minds,  
The fool enlightens, and the wise he blinds.  
This youth proposing to possess and scape,  
Began in murder, to conclude in rape:  
Unpraised by me, though Heaven sometime may bless  
An impious act with undeserved success:  
The great, it seems, are privileged alone,  
To punish all injustice but their own.  
But here I stop, not daring to proceed,  
Yet blush to flatter an unrighteous deed;  
For crimes are but permitted, not decreed.

Resolved on force, his wit the prator bent:  
To find the means that might secure the event:  
Nor long he laboured, for his lucky thought  
In captive Cymon found the friend he sought.  
The example pleased: the cause and crime the same,  
An injured lover and a ravished dame.  
How much he durst he knew by what he dared,  
The less he had to lose, the less he cared  
To menage loathsome life when love was the reward.

This pondered well, and fixed on his intent,  
In depth of night he for the prisoner sent;  
In secret sent, the public view to shun.  
Then with a sober smile he thus begun:  
"The Powers above, who bounteously bestow  
Their gifts and graces on mankind below,  
Yet prove our merit first, nor blindly give  
To such as are not worthy to receive:  
For valour and for virtue they provide  
Their due reward, but first they must be tried:  
These fruitful seeds within your mind they sowed;  
'Twas yours to improve the talent they bestowed,  
They gave you to be born of noble kind,  
They gave you love to lighten up your mind  
And purge the grosser parts: they gave you care  
To please, and courage to deserve the fair.

"Thus far they tried you, and by proof they found  
The grain entrusted in a grateful ground  
But still the great experiment remained,  
They suffered you to lose the prize you gained,  
That you might learn the gift was theirs alone,  
And, when restored, to them the blessing own.  
Restored it soon will be: the means prepared,  
The difficulty smoothed, the danger shared:



It be yourself, the care to me resign,  
Then Iphigene is yours, Cassandra mine.  
Your rival Pasimond pursues your life,  
Impatient to revenge his ravished wife,  
But yet not his; to-morrow is behind,  
And Love our fortunes in one band has joined:  
Two brothers are our foes, Ormisda mine  
As much declared as Pasimond is thine:  
To-morrow must their common vows be tied:  
With Love to friend, and Fortune for our guide,  
Let both resolve to die, or each redeem a bride.

“Right I have none, nor hast thou much to plead  
’Tis force, when done, must justify the deed:  
Our task performed, we next prepare for flight:  
And let the losers talk in vain of right:  
We with the fair will sail before the wind;  
If they are grieved, I leave the laws behind.  
Speak thy resolves: if now thy courage droop,  
Despair in prison and abandon hope;  
But if thou darest in arms thy love regain  
(For liberty without thy love were vain),  
Then second my design to seize the prey,  
Or lead to second rape, for well thou knowest the way.”

Said Cymon, overjoyed: “Do thou propose  
The means to fight, and only show the foes:  
For from the first, when love had fired my mind,  
Resolved, I left the care of life behind.”

To this the bold Lysimachus replied,  
“Let Heaven be neuter and the sword decide:  
The spousals are prepared, already play  
The minstrels, and provoke the tardy day:  
By this the brides are waked, their grooms are dressed  
All Rhodes is summoned to the nuptial feast,  
All but myself the sole unbidden guest.

Unbidden though I am, I will be there,  
And, joined by thee, intend to joy the fair.

"Now hear the rest: when day resigns the light,  
And cheerful torches gild the jolly night,  
Be ready at my call; my chosen few  
With arms administered shall aid thy crew.  
Then entering unexpected will we seize  
Our destined prey, from men dissolved in ease,  
By wine disabled, unprepared for fight,  
And hastening to the seas, suborn our flight:  
The seas are ours, for I command the fort,  
A ship well manned expects us in the port:  
If they, or if their friends, the prize contest,  
Death shall attend the man who dares resist."

It pleased; the prisoner to his hold retired.  
His troop with equal emulation fired,  
All fixed to fight, and all their wonted work required.

The sun arose: the streets were thronged around,  
The palace opened, and the posts were crowned.  
The double bridegroom at the door attends  
The expected spouse, and entertains the friends:  
They meet, they lead to church, the priests invoke  
The Powers, and feed the flames with fragrant smoke.  
This done, they feast, and at the close of night  
By kindled torches vary their delight,  
These lead the lively dance, and those the brimming  
bowls invite.

Now, at the appointed place and hour assigned,  
With souls resolved the ravishers were joined.  
Three bands are formed: the first is sent before  
To favour the retreat and guard the shore;  
The second at the palace-gate is placed.  
And up the lofty stairs ascend the last:

A peaceful troop they seem with shining vests,  
But coats of mail beneath secure their breasts.

Dauntless they enter, Cymon at their head,  
And find the feast renewed, the table spread:  
Sweet voices, mixed with instrumental sounds,  
Ascend the vaulted roof, the vaulted roof rebounds.  
When, like the harpies, rushing through the hall  
The sudden troop appears, the tables fall,  
Their smoking load is on the pavement thrown;  
Each ravisher prepares to seize his own:  
The brides, invaded with a rude embrace,  
Shriek out for aid, confusion fills the place.  
Quick to redeem the prey their plighted lords  
Advance, the palace gleams with shining swords.

But late is all defence, and succour vain;  
The rape is made, the ravishers remain:  
Two sturdy slaves were only sent before  
To bear the purchased prize in safety to the shore.  
The troop retires, the lovers close the rear,  
With forward faces not confessing fear:  
Backward they move, but scorn their pace to mend;  
Then seek the stairs, and with slow haste descend.

Fierce Pasimond, their passage to prevent,  
Thrust full on Cymon's back in his descent,  
The blade returned unbathed, and to the handle t  
Stout Cymon soon remounts, and cleft in two  
His rival's head with one descending blow:  
And as the next in rank Ormisda stood,  
He turned the point; the sword enured to bloo  
Bored his unguarded breast, which poured a pr  
owed revenge the gathering crowd p  
d, the fight renews;

The hall is heaped with corps; the sprinkled gore  
Besmeares the walls, and floats the marble floor.  
Dispersed at length, the drunken squadron flies,  
The victors to their vessel bear the prize,  
And hear behind loud groans, and lamentable cries.

The crew with merry shouts their anchors weigh,  
Then ply their oars, and brush the buxom sea.  
While troops of gathered Rhodians crowd the key.  
What should the people do when left alone?  
The governor and government are gone;  
The public wealth to foreign parts conveyed;  
Some troops disbanded, and the rest unpaid.  
Rhodes is the sovereign of the sea no more;  
Their ships unrigged, and spent their naval store;  
They neither could defend nor can pursue,  
But grind their teeth, and cast a helpless view;  
In vain with darts a distant war they try,  
Short, and more short, the missive weapons fly.  
Meanwhile the ravishers their crimes enjoy,  
And flying sails and sweeping oars employ:  
The cliffs of Rhodes in little space are lost;  
Jove's isle they seek, nor Jove denies his coast.

In safety landed on the Candian shore,  
With generous wines their spirits they restore.  
There Cymon with his Rhodian friend resides,  
Both court and wed at once the willing brides.  
A war ensues, the Cretans own their cause,  
Stiff to defend their hospitable laws.  
Both parties lose by turns, and neither wins,  
Till peace, propounded by a truce, begins.  
The kindred of the slain forgive the deed,  
But a short exile must for show precede:  
The term expired, from Candia they remove,  
And happy each at home enjoys his love.

## VIII. THEODORE AND HONORIA

*From Boccace*

OF all the cities in Romanian lands,  
The chief and most renowned Ravenna stands;  
Adorned in ancient times with arms and arts,  
And rich inhabitants with generous hearts.  
But Theodore the brave, above the rest,  
With gifts of fortune and of nature blessed,  
The foremost place for wealth and honour held,  
And all in feats of chivalry excelled.

This noble youth to madness loved a dame  
Of high degree, Honoria was her name;  
Fair as the fairest, but of haughty mind,  
And fiercer than became so soft a kind;  
Proud of her birth (for equal she had none),  
The rest she scorned, but hated him alone;  
His gifts, his constant courtship, nothing gained;  
For she, the more he loved, the more disdained.  
He lived with all the pomp he could devise,  
At tilts and tournaments obtained the prize,  
But found no favour in his lady's eyes:  
Relentless as a rock, the lofty maid  
Turned all to poison that he did or said:  
Nor prayers nor tears nor offered vows could move;  
The work went backward; and the more he strove  
To advance his suit, the farther from her love.

Wearied at length, and wanting remedy,  
He doubted oft, and oft resolved to die.  
But pride stood ready to prevent the blow,  
For who would die to gratify a foe?  
His generous mind disdained so mean a fate;  
That passed, his next endeavour was to hate.

But vainer that relief than all the rest;  
The less he hoped, with more desire possessed;  
Love stood the siege, and would not yield his breast.

Change was the next, but change deceived his care;  
He sought a fairer, but found none so fair.  
He would have worn her out by slow degrees,  
As men by fasting starve the untamed disease;  
But present love required a present ease.  
Looking, he feeds alone his famished eyes,  
Feeds lingering death, but, looking not, he dies.  
Yet still he chose the longest way to fate,  
Wasting at once his life and his estate.

His friends beheld, and pitied him in vain,  
For what advice can ease a lover's pain?  
Absence, the best expedient they could find,  
Might save the fortune, if not cure the mind—  
This means they long proposed, but little gained,  
Yet after much pursuit at length obtained.

Hard you may think it was to give consent,  
But struggling with his own desires he went;  
With large expense, and with a pompous train,  
Provided as to visit France or Spain,  
Or for some distant voyage o'er the main.  
But Love had clipped his wings, and cut him short,  
Confined within the purlieus of his court.  
Three miles he went, nor farther could retreat;  
His travels ended at his country seat:  
To Chassi's pleasing plains he took his way,  
There pitched his tents, and there resolved to stay

The spring was in the prime, the neighbouring grove  
Supplied with birds, the choristers of love;  
Music unbought, that ministered delight;  
To morning walks, and lulled his cares by night;

There he discharged his friends, but not the ex  
Of frequent treats and proud magnificence.  
He lived as kings retire, though more at large  
From public business, yet with equal charge;  
With house and heart still open to receive;  
As well content as love would give him leave  
He would have lived more free; but many a  
Who could forsake the friend, pursued the f

It happed one morning, as his fancy led  
Before his usual hour he left his bed,  
To walk within a lonely lawn, that stood  
On every side surrounded by the wood:  
Alone he walked, to please his pensive m  
And sought the deepest solitude to find;  
'T was in a grove of spreading pines he strayed;  
The wind within the quivering branches played,  
The dancing trees a mournful music made;  
The place itself was suiting to his care,  
Uncouth and savage as the cruel fair.  
He wandered on, unknowing where he went,  
Lost in the wood, and all on love intent:  
The day already half his race had run,  
And summoned him to due repast at noon,  
But Love could feel no hunger but his own.

While listening to the murmuring leaves he stood,  
More than a mile immersed within the wood,  
At once the wind was laid; the whispering sound  
Was dumb; a rising earthquake rocked the ground;  
With deeper brown the grove was overspread,  
A sudden horror seized his giddy head,  
And his ears tinkled, and his colour fled.  
Nature was in alarm; some danger nigh  
Seemed threatened, though unseen to mortal eye.

Moved to fear, he summoned all his soul,  
And stood collected in himself—and whole;  
Not long: for soon a whirlwind rose around,  
And from afar he heard a screaming sound,  
As of a dame distressed, who cried for aid,  
And filled with loud laments the secret shade.

A thicket close beside the grove there stood,  
With briars and brambles choked, and dwarfish wood;  
From thence the noise, which now approaching near  
With more distinguished notes invades his ear;  
He raised his head, and saw a beauteous maid  
With hair dishevelled issuing through the shade;  
Stripped of her clothes, and e'en those parts revealed  
Which modest nature keeps from sight concealed.  
Her face, her hands, her naked limbs were torn,  
With passing through the brakes and prickly thorn;  
Two mastiffs gaunt and grim her flight pursued,  
And oft their fastened fangs in blood imbrued;  
Oft they came up, and pinched her tender side,  
"Mercy, O mercy, Heaven", she ran, and cried:  
When Heaven was named, they loosed their hold again,  
Then sprung she forth, they followed her amain.

Not far behind, a knight of swarthy face  
High on a coal-black steed pursued the chase;  
With flashing flames his ardent eyes were filled,  
And in his hands a naked sword he held.  
He cheered the dogs to follow her who fled,  
And vowed revenge on her devoted head.

As Theodore was born of noble kind,  
The brutal action roused his manly mind:  
Moved with unworthy usage of the maid,  
He, though unarmed, resolved to give her aid.





Long time I dragged my days in fruitless care :  
Tiv'n loathing life, and plunged in deep despair,  
To finish my unhappy life I fell  
On this sharp sword, and now am damned in hell.

"Short was her joy: for soon the insulting maid  
By Heaven's decree in the cold grave was laid;  
And as in unrepenting sin she died,  
Doomed to the same bad place, is punished for her pride:  
Because she deemed I well deserved to die,  
And made a merit of her cruelty.  
There, then, we met: both tried, and both were cast,  
And this irrevocable sentence passed,  
That she, whom I so long pursued in vain,  
Should suffer from my hands a lingering pain:  
Renewed to life, that she might daily die,  
I daily doomed to follow, she to fly;  
No more a lover, but a mortal foe,  
I seek her life (for love is none below);  
As often as my dogs with better speed  
Arrest her flight, is she to death decreed:  
Then with this fatal sword, on which I died,  
I pierce her opened back or tender side,  
And tear that hardened heart from out her breast,  
Which with her entrails makes my hungry hounds a feast  
Nor lies she long, but as her fates ordain.  
Springs up to life, and fresh to second pain,  
Is saved to-day, to-morrow to be slain."

This, versed in death, the infernal knight relates.  
And then for proof fulfilled their common fates:  
Her heart and bowels through her back he drew,  
And fed the hounds that helped him to pursue.  
Stern looked the fiend, as frustrate of his will,  
Not half-sufficed, and greedy yet to kill.

And now the soul, expiring through the wound,  
Had left the body breathless on the ground,  
When thus the grisly spectre spoke again:  
"Behold the fruit of ill-rewarded pain!  
As many months as I sustained her hate,  
So many years is she condemned by Fate  
To daily death; and every several place  
Conscious of her disdain and my disgrace,  
Must witness her just punishment, and be  
A scene of triumph and revenge to me.  
As in this grove I took my last farewell,  
As on this very spot of earth I fell,  
As Friday saw me die, so she my prey  
Becomes even here, on this revolving day."

Thus while he spoke, the virgin from the ground  
Upstart fresh, already closed the wound,  
And unconcerned for all she felt before,  
Precipitates her flight along the shore:  
The hell-hounds, as ungorged with flesh and blood,  
Pursue their prey, and seek their wonted food:  
The fiend remounts his courser, mends his pace,  
And all the vision vanished from the place.

Long stood the noble youth oppressed with awe  
And stupid at the wondrous things he saw,  
Surpassing common faith, transgressing Nature's law:  
He would have been asleep, and wished to wake,  
But dreams, he knew, no long impression make,  
Though strong at first; if vision, to what end,  
But such as must his future state portend,  
His love the damsel, and himself the fiend?  
But yet reflecting that it could not be  
From Heaven, which cannot impious acts decree,  
Resolved within himself to shun the snare  
Which hell for his destruction did prepare;

And as his better genius should direct,  
From an ill cause to draw a good effect.

Inspired from Heaven he homeward took his way,  
Nor palled his new design with long delay;  
But of his train a trusty servant sent  
To call his friends together at his tent.  
They came, and, usual salutations paid,  
With words premeditated thus he said:  
"What you have often counselled, to remove  
My vain pursuit of unregarded love,  
By thrift my sinking fortune to repair,  
Though late, yet is at last become my care:  
My heart shall be my own: my vast expense  
Reduced to bounds by timely providence:  
This only I require; invite for me  
Honor, with her father's family,  
Her friends and mine; the cause I shall display,  
On Friday next, for that 's the appointed day".

Well pleased were all his friends, the task was light,  
The father, mother, daughter they invite;  
Hardly the dame was drawn to this repast;  
But yet resolved, because it was the last.  
The day was come, the guests invited came,  
And with the rest the inexorable dame:  
A feast prepared with riotous expense.  
Much cost, more care, and most magnificence.  
The place ordained was in that haunted grove  
Where the revenging ghost pursued his love:  
The tables in a proud pavilion spread,  
With flowers below, and tissue overhead:  
The rest in rank, Honor, chief in place,  
Was artfully contrived to set her face  
To front the thicket and behold the chase.

The feast was served, the time so well forecast,  
That just when the dessert and fruits were placed,  
The fiend's alarm began; the hollow sound  
Sung in the leaves, the forest shook around,  
Air blackened, rolled the thunder, groaned the ground.

Nor long before the loud laments arise,  
Of one distressed, and mastiffs' mingled cries;  
And first the dame came rushing through the wood,  
And next the famished hounds that sought their food,  
And griped her flanks, and oft essayed their jaws in  
blood.

Last came the felon on the sable steed,  
Armed with his naked sword, and urged his dogs to  
speed.

She ran, and cried, her flight directly bent  
(A guest unbidden) to the fatal tent,  
The scene of death, and place ordained for punishment.  
Loud was the noise, aghast was every guest,  
The women shrieked, the men forsook the feast;  
The hounds at nearer distance hoarsely bayed;  
The hunter close pursued the visionary maid,  
She rent the heaven with loud laments, imploring aid.

The gallants, to protect the lady's right,  
Their fauchions brandished at the grisly sight;  
High on his stirrups he provoked the fight.  
Then on the crowd he cast a furious look,  
And withered all their strength before he strook:  
"Back on your lives! let be", said he, "my prey,  
And let my vengeance take the destined way:  
Vain are your arms, and vainer your defence,  
Against the eternal doom of Providence:  
Mine is the ungrateful maid by Heaven designed:  
Mercy she would not give, nor mercy shall she find"

At this the former tale again he told  
With thundering tone, and dreadful to behold:  
Sunk were their hearts with horror of the crime,  
Nor needed to be warned a second time.  
But bore each other back; some knew the face,  
And all had heard the much lamented case  
Of him who fell for love, and this the fatal place.

And now the infernal minister advanced,  
Seized the due victim, and with fury lanced  
Her back, and piercing through her inmost heart,  
Drew backwards as before the offending part.  
The reeking entrails next he tore away,  
And to his meagre mastiffs made a prey.  
The pale assistants on each other stared,  
With gaping mouths for issuing words prepared:  
The stillborn sounds upon the palate hung,  
And died imperfect on the faltering tongue.  
The fright was general; but the female band,  
A helpless train, in more confusion stand:  
With horror shuddering, on a heap they run,  
Sick at the sight of hateful justice done;  
For conscience rung the alarm, and made the case their  
own.

So spread upon a lake, with upward eye,  
A plump of fowl behold their foe on high:  
They close their trembling troop; and all attend  
On whom the sowsing eagle will descend.

But most the proud Honoria feared the event,  
And thought to her alone the vision sent.  
Her guilt presents to her distracted mind  
Heaven's justice. Theodore's revengeful kind,  
And the same fate to the same sin assigned;  
Already sees herself the monster's prey,



At every little noise she looked behind,  
For still the knight was present to her mind:  
And anxious oft she started on the way,  
And thought the horseman-ghost came thundering for his  
prey.

Returned, she took her bed with little rest,  
But in short slumbers dreamt the funeral feast:  
Awake, she turned her side, and slept again;  
The same black vapours mounted in her brain,  
And the same dreams returned with double pain.

Now forced to wake, because afraid to sleep,  
Her blood all fevered, with a furious leap  
She sprung from bed, distracted in her mind,  
And feared, at every step, a twitching spright behind.  
Darkling and desperate, with a staggering pace,  
Of death afraid, and conscious of disgrace,  
Fear, pride, remorse, at once her heart assailed.  
Pride put remorse to flight, but fear prevailed.  
Friday, the fatal day, when next it came,  
Her soul forethought the fiend would change his game,  
And her pursue, or Theodore be slain,  
And two ghosts join their packs to hunt her o'er the  
plain.

This dreadful image so possessed her mind,  
That, desperate any succour else to find,  
She ceased all further hope; and now began  
To make reflection on the unhappy man  
Rich, brave, and young, who past exertion loved,  
Proof to disdain, and not to be repulsed  
Of all the men respected and admired,  
Of all the dames, except herself, desired.  
Why not of her? preferred above the rest  
By him with knightly deeds, and open love professed  
So had another been, where he his vows addressed.



This quelled her pride, yet other doubts remained,  
That once disdaining, she might be disdained.  
The fear was just, but greater fear prevailed,  
Fear of her life by hellish hounds assailed:  
He took a lowering leave; but who can tell  
What outward hate might inward love conceal?  
Her sex's arts she knew, and why not then  
Might deep dissembling have a place in men?  
Here hope began to dawn; resolved to try,  
She fixed on this her utmost remedy;  
Death was behind, but hard it was to die:  
'T was time enough at last on death to call;  
The precipice in sight, a shrub was all  
That kindly stood betwixt to break the fatal fall.

One maid she had, beloved above the rest:  
Secure of her, the secret she confessed;  
And now the cheerful light her fears dispelled,  
She with no winding turns the truth concealed,  
But put the woman off, and stood revealed:  
With faults confessed, commissioned her to go,  
If pity yet had place, and reconcile her foe.  
The welcome message made was soon received;  
'T was what he wished and hoped, but scarce believed:  
Fate seemed a fair occasion to present,  
He knew the sex, and feared she might repent  
Should he delay the moment of consent.  
There yet remained to gain her friends (a care  
The modesty of maidens well might spare);  
But she with such a zeal the cause embraced,  
(As women, where they will, are all in haste,)  
The father, mother, and the kin beside,  
Were overborne by fury of the tide;  
With full consent of all she changed her state;  
Resistless in her love as in her hate.

By her example warned, the rest beware;  
More easy, less imperious, were the fair;  
And that one hunting, which the devil designed  
For one fair female, lost him half the kind.

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## GEORGE CRABBE

(1754-1832)

## IX. EDWARD SHORE

GENIUS! thou gift of Heav'n! thou light divine!  
Amid what dangers art thou doom'd to shine!  
Oft will the body's weakness check thy force,  
Oft damp thy vigour, and impede thy course;  
And trembling nerves compel thee to restrain  
Thy nobler efforts, to contend with pain;  
Or Want (sad guest!) will in thy presence come,  
And breathe around her melancholy gloom:  
To life's low cares will thy proud thought confine,  
And make her sufferings, her impatience, thine.

Evil and strong, seducing passions prey  
On soaring minds, and win them from their way,  
Who then to Vice the subject spirits give,  
And in the service of the conqu'ror live,  
Like captive Samson making sport for all,  
Who fear'd their strength, and glory in their fall

Genius, with virtue, still may lack the aid  
Implor'd by humble minds, and hearts afraid  
May leave to timid souls the shield and sword  
Of the tried Faith, and the resistless Word  
Amid a world of dangers venturing forth,  
Frail, but yet fearless, proud in conscious worth,

Till strong temptation, in some fatal time,  
Assails the heart, and wins the soul to crime;  
When left by honour, and by sorrow spent,  
Unused to pray, unable to repent,  
The nobler powers, that once exalted high  
Th' aspiring man, shall then degraded lie:  
Reason, through anguish, shall her throne forsake,  
And strength of mind but stronger madness make.

When *Edward Shore* had reach'd his twentieth year,  
He felt his bosom light, his conscience clear;  
Applause at school the youthful hero gain'd,  
And trials there with manly strength sustain'd:  
With prospects bright upon the world he came,  
Pure love of virtue, strong desire of fame:  
Men watch'd the way his lofty mind would take,  
And all foretold the progress he would make.

Boast of these friends, to older men a guide,  
Proud of his parts, but gracious in his pride;  
He bore a gay good-nature in his face,  
And in his air were dignity and grace;  
Dress that became his state and years he wore,  
And sense and spirit shone in *Edward Shore*.

Thus, while admiring friends the Youth beheld,  
His own disgust their forward hopes repell'd;  
For he unfix'd, unfixing, look'd around,  
And no employment but in seeking found;  
He gave his restless thoughts to views refined,  
And shrank from worldly cares with wounded mind

Rejecting trade, awhile he dwelt on laws,  
"But who could plead, if unapproved the cause?"  
A doubting, dismal tribe physicians seem'd;  
Divines o'er texts and disputations dream'd;

War and its glory he perhaps could love,  
But there again he must the cause approve.

Our hero thought no deed should gain applause  
Where timid virtue found support in laws;  
He to all good would soar, would fly all sin,  
By the pure prompting of the will within;  
"Who needs a law that binds him not to steal,"  
Ask'd the young teacher, "can he rightly feel?  
To curb the will, or arm in honour's cause,  
Or aid the weak—are these enforced by laws?  
Should we a foul, ungenerous action dread,  
Because a law condemns th' adulterous bed?  
Or fly pollution, not for fear of stain,  
But that some statute tells us to refrain?  
The grosser herd in ties like these we bind,  
In virtue's freedom moves th' enlighten'd mind."

"Man's heart deceives him," said a friend.—"Of  
course,"

Replied the Youth: "but has it power to force?  
Unless it forces, call it as you will,  
It is but wish, and proneness to the ill."

"Art thou not tempted?" - "Do I fall?" said Shore.  
"The pure have fallen."—"Then are pure no more.  
While reason guides me, I shall walk aright.  
Nor need a steadier hand, or stronger light;  
Nor this in dread of awful threats, design'd  
For the weak spirit and the grov'ling mind:  
But that, engaged by thoughts and views sublime,  
I wage free war with grossness and with crime."  
'Thus look'd he proudly on the vulgar crew.  
Whom statutes govern, and whom fears subdue.

Faith, with his virtue, he indeed profess'd,  
But doubts deprived his ardent mind of rest;

Reason, his sovereign mistress, fail'd to show  
Light through the mazes of the world below:  
Questions arose, and they surpass'd the skill  
Of his sole aid, and would be dubious still;  
These to discuss he sought no common guide,  
But to the doubters in his doubts applied;  
When all together might in freedom speak,  
And their loved truth with mutual ardour seek.  
Alas! though men who feel their eyes decay  
Take more than common pains to find their way,  
Yet, when for this they ask each other's aid,  
Their mutual purpose is the more delay'd:  
Of all their doubts, their reasoning clear'd not one,  
Still the same spots were present in the sun;  
Still the same scruples haunted Edward's mind,  
Who found no rest, nor took the means to find.

But though with shaken faith, and slave to fame,  
Vain and aspiring on the world he came,  
Yet was he studious, serious, moral, grave,  
No passion's victim, and no system's slave:  
Vice he opposed, indulgence he disdain'd,  
And o'er each sense in conscious triumph reign'd.

Who often reads will sometimes wish to write,  
And Shore would yield instruction and delight:  
A serious drama he design'd, but found  
'Twas tedious travelling in that gloomy ground;  
A deep and solemn story he would try,  
But grew ashamed of ghosts, and laid it by;  
Sermons he wrote, but they who knew his creed,  
Or knew it not, were ill-disposed to read;  
And he would lastly be the nation's guide,  
But, studying, fail'd to fix upon a side;  
Fame he desired, and talents he possess'd,  
But loved not labour, though he could not rest,

Nor firmly fix the vacillating mind,  
That, ever working, could no centre find.

'Tis thus a sanguine reader loves to trace  
The Nile forth rushing on his glorious race;  
Calm and secure the fancied traveller goes  
Through sterile deserts and by threat'ning foes;  
He thinks not then of Afric's scorching sands,  
Th' Arabian sea, the Abyssinian hands;  
Fasils and Michaels, and the robbers all,  
Whom we politely chiefs and heroes call:  
He of success alone delights to think,  
He views that fount, he stands upon the brink,  
And drinks a fancied draught, exulting so to drink.

In his own room, and with his books around,  
His lively mind its chief employment found;  
Then idly busy, quietly employ'd,  
And, lost to life, his visions were enjoy'd:  
Yet still he took a keen inquiring view  
Of all that crowds neglect, desire, pursue;  
And thus abstracted, curious, still, serene,  
He, unemploy'd, beheld life's shifting scene;  
Still, more averse from vulgar joys and cares,  
Still more unfitted for the world's affairs.

There was a house where Edward oft-times went,  
And social hours in pleasant trifling spent:  
He read, conversed, and reason'd, sang and play'd.  
And all were happy while the idler stay'd:  
Too happy one! for thence arose the pain,  
Till this engaging trifier came again.

But did he love? We answer, day by day,  
The loving feet would take th' accusom'd way,  
The amorous eye would rove as if in quest  
Of something rare, and on the mansion rest.

ie same soft passion touch'd the gentle tongue,  
id *Anna's* charms in tender notes were sung;  
ie ear, too, seem'd to feel the common flame,  
lothed and delighted with the fair one's name;  
nd thus, as love each other part possess'd,  
he heart, no doubt, its sovereign power confess'd.

Pleased in her sight, the Youth required no more;  
ot rich himself, he saw the damsel poor;  
nd he too wisely, nay, too kindly loved,  
o pain the being whom his soul approved.

A serious Friend our cautious Youth possess'd,  
And at his table sat a welcome guest:  
Both unemploy'd, it was their chief delight  
To read what free and daring authors write;  
Authors who loved from common views to soar,  
And seek the fountains never traced before:  
Truth they profess'd, yet often left the true  
And beaten prospect, for the wild and new.  
His chosen friend his fiftieth year had seen,  
His fortune easy, and his air serene;  
Deist and atheist call'd; for few agreed  
What were his notions, principles, or creed;  
His mind reposed not, for he hated rest,  
But all things made a query or a jest;  
Perplex'd himself, he ever sought to prove  
That man is doom'd in endless doubt to rove;  
Himself in darkness he profess'd to be,  
And would maintain that not a man could see.

The youthful Friend, dissentient, reason'd still  
Of the soul's prowess, and the subject-will;  
Of virtue's beauty, and of honour's force,  
And a warm zeal gave life to his discourse:  
Since from his feelings all his fire arose,  
And he had interest in the themes he chose.

The Friend, indulging a sarcastic smile,  
Said, "Dear enthusiast! thou wilt change thy style,  
When man's delusions, errors, crimes, deceit,  
No more distress thee, and no longer cheat".

Yet, lo! this cautious man, so coolly wise,  
On a young Beauty fix'd unguarded eyes;  
And her he married: Edward at the view  
Bade to his cheerful visits long adieu;  
But haply err'd, for this engaging bride  
No mirth suppress'd, but rather cause supplied:  
And when she saw the friends, by reasoning long,  
Confused if right, and positive if wrong,  
With playful speech, and smile that spoke delight,  
She made them careless both of wrong and right.

This gentle damsel gave consent to wed,  
With school and school-day dinners in her head:  
She now was promised choice of daintiest food,  
And costly dress, that made her sovereign good;  
With walks on hilly heath to banish spleen,  
And summer-visits when the roads were clean.  
All these she loved, to these she gave consent,  
And she was married to her heart's content.

Their manner this—the Friends together read,  
Till books a cause for disputation bred;  
Debate then follow'd, and the vapour'd child  
Declared they argued till her head was wild;  
And strange to her it was that mortal brain  
Could seek the trial, or endure the pain.

Then, as the Friend reposed, the younger pair  
Sat down to cards, and play'd beside his chair;  
Till he, awaking, to his books applied,  
Or heard the music of th' obedient bride:



If mild the evening, in the fields they stray'd,  
And their own flock with partial eye survey'd;  
But oft the husband, to indulgence prone,  
Resumed his book, and bade them walk alone.

“Do, my kind Edward—I must take mine ease—  
Name the dear girl the planets and the trees:  
Tell her what warblers pour their evening song,  
What insects flutter, as you walk along;  
Teach her to fix the roving thoughts, to bind  
The wandering sense, and methodise the mind.”

This was obey'd; and oft, when this was done,  
They calmly gazed on the declining sun;  
In silence saw the glowing landscape fade,  
Or, sitting, sang beneath the arbour's shade:  
Till rose the moon, and on each youthful face  
*Shed a soft beauty and a dangerous grace.*

When the young Wife beheld in long debate  
The friends, all careless as she seeming sate,  
It soon appear'd there was in one combined  
The nobler person and the richer mind:  
He wore no wig, no grisly beard was seen,  
And none beheld him careless or unclean,  
Or watch'd him sleeping. We indeed have heard  
Of sleeping beauty, and it has appear'd;  
'T is seen in infants—there indeed we find  
The features soften'd by the slumbering mind;  
But other beauties, when disposed to sleep,  
Should from the eye of keen inspector keep:  
The lovely nymph who would her swain surprise,  
May close her mouth, but not conceal her eyes;  
Sleep from the fairest face some beauty takes,  
And all the homely features homelier makes:  
So thought our wife, beholding with a sigh  
Her sleeping spouse, and Edward smiling by.

A sick relation for the husband sent;  
Without delay the friendly sceptic went;  
Nor fear'd the youthful pair, for he had seen  
The wife untroubled, and the friend serene;  
No selfish purpose in his roving eyes,  
No vile deception in her fond replies:  
So judg'd the husband, and with judgment true,  
For neither yet the guilt or danger knew.

What now remain'd? but they again should play  
Th' accustom'd game, and walk th' accustom'd way;  
With careless freedom should converse or read,  
And the Friend's absence neither fear nor heed:  
But rather now they seem'd confused, constrain'd;  
Within their room still restless they remain'd,  
And painfully they felt, and knew each other pain'd.  
Ah, foolish men! how could ye thus depend,  
One, on himself, the other on his friend?

The Youth with troubled eye the lady saw,  
Yet felt too brave, too daring to withdraw;  
While she, with tuneless hand the jarring keys  
Touching, was not one moment at her ease:  
Now would she walk, and call her friendly guide,  
Now speak of rain, and cast her cloak aside;  
Seize on a book, unconscious what she read,  
And restless still to new resources fled:  
Then laugh'd aloud, then tried to look serene;  
And ever changed, and every change was seen.

Painful it is to dwell on deeds of shame—  
The trying day was past, another came;  
The third was all remorse, confusion, dread,  
And (all too late!) the fallen hero fled.

Then felt the Youth, in that seducing time,  
How feebly Honour guards the heart from crime:

Small is his native strength; man needs the stay,  
The strength imparted in the trying day;  
For all that Honour brings against the force  
Of headlong passion, aids its rapid course;  
Its slight resistance but provokes the fire,  
As wood-work stops the flame, and then conveys  
    higher.

The Husband came; a wife by guilt made bold  
Had, meeting, soothed him, as in days of old;  
But soon this fact transpired; her strong distress,  
And his Friend's absence, left him nought to guess.

Still cool, though grieved, thus prudence bade h  
    write—

“I cannot pardon, and I will not fight;  
Thou art too poor a culprit for the laws,  
And I too faulty to support my cause:  
All must be punish'd; I must sigh alone,  
At home thy victim for her guilt atone;  
And thou, unhappy! virtuous now no more,  
Must loss of fame, peace, purity deplore;  
Sinners with praise will pierce thee to the heart,  
And saints, deriding, tell thee what thou art”.

Such was his fall; and Edward, from that time,  
Felt in full force the censure and the crime—  
Despised, ashamed; his noble views before  
And his proud thoughts, degraded him the more:  
Should he repent—would that conceal his shame?  
Could peace be his? It perish'd with his fame:  
Himself he scorn'd, nor could his crime forgive;  
He fear'd to die, yet felt ashamed to live:  
Grieved, but not contrite, was his heart; oppress'd,  
Not broken; not converted, but distress'd;  
He wanted will to bend the stubborn knee,

He wanted light the cause of ill to see,  
To learn how frail is man, how humble then should be;  
For faith he had not, or a faith too weak  
To gain the help that humbled sinners seek;  
Else had he pray'd—to an offended God  
His tears had flown a penitential flood;  
Though far astray, he would have heard the call  
Of mercy—"Come! return, thou prodigal":  
Then, though confused, distress'd, ashamed, afraid,  
Still had the trembling penitent obey'd;  
Though faith had fainted, when assail'd by fear,  
Hope to the soul had whisper'd, "Persevere!"  
Till in his Father's house, an humbled guest,  
He would have found forgiveness, comfort, rest.

But all this joy was to our Youth denied  
By his fierce passions and his daring pride;  
And shame and doubt impell'd him in a course,  
Once so abhorr'd, with unresisted force.  
Proud minds and guilty, whom their crimes oppress,  
Fly to new crimes for comfort and redress;  
So found our fallen Youth a short relief  
In wine, the opiate guilt applies to grief,—  
From fleeting mirth that o'er the bottle lives,  
From the false joy its inspiration gives,—  
And from associates pleased to find a friend  
With powers to lead them, gladden, and defend,  
In all those scenes where transient ease is found,  
For minds whom sins oppress and sorrows wound.

Wine is like anger; for it makes us strong,  
Blind, and impatient, and it leads us wrong;  
The strength is quickly lost, we feel the error long:  
Thus led, thus strengthen'd, in an evil cause,  
For folly pleading, sought the Youth applause;

Sad for a time, then eloquently wild,  
He gaily spoke, as his companions smiled;  
Lightly he rose, and with his former grace  
Proposed some doubt, and argued on the case;  
Fate and foreknowledge were his favourite themes—  
How vain man's purpose, how absurd his schemes:  
"Whatever is, was ere our birth decreed;  
We think our actions from ourselves proceed,  
And idly we lament th' inevitable deed;  
It seems our own, but there's a power above  
Directs the motion, nay, that makes us move;  
Nor good nor evil can you beings name,  
Who are but rooks and castles in the game;  
Superior natures with their puppets play,  
Till, bagg'd or buried, all are swept away".

Such were the notions of a mind to ill  
Now prone, but ardent and determined still:  
Of joy now eager, as before of fame,  
And screen'd by folly when assail'd by shame,  
Deeply he sank; obey'd each passion's call,  
And used his reason to defend them all.

Shall I proceed, and step by step relate  
The odious progress of a Sinner's fate?  
No—let me rather hasten to the time  
(Sure to arrive!) when misery waits on crime.

With Virtue, prudence fled; what Shore poor  
Was sold, was spent, and he was now distress'  
And Want, unwelcome stranger, pale and wan  
Met with her haggard looks the hurried man  
His pride felt keenly what he must expect  
From useless pity and from cold neglect.

Struck by new terrors, from his friends he  
Wept his woes upon a restless bed;

Retiring late, at early hour to rise,  
 With shrunk features, and with bloodshot eyes:  
 If sleep one moment closed the dismal view,  
 Fancy her terrors built upon the true:  
 And night and day had their alternate woes,  
 That baffled pleasure, and that mock'd repose;  
 'Till to despair and anguish was consign'd  
 The wreck and ruin of a noble mind.

Now seized for debt, and lodged within a jail,  
 He tried his friendships, and he found them fail;  
 Then fail'd his spirits, and his thoughts were all  
 Fix'd on his sins, his sufferings, and his fall:  
 His ruffled mind was pictured in his face,  
 Once the fair seat of dignity and grace:  
 Great was the danger of a man so prone  
 To think of madness, and to think alone;  
 Yet pride still lived, and struggled to sustain  
 The drooping spirit and the roving brain;  
 But this too fail'd: a Friend his freedom gave,  
 And sent him help the threat'ning world to brave;  
 Gave solid counsel what to seek or flee,  
 But still would stranger to his person be:  
 In vain! the truth determined to explore,  
 He traced the Friend whom he had wrong'd before.

This was too much; both aided and advised  
 By one who shunn'd him, pitied, and despised:  
 He bore it not: 't was a deciding stroke,  
 And on his reason like a torrent broke:  
 In dreadful stillness he appear'd a while,  
 With vacant horror and a ghastly smile;  
 Then rose at once into the frantic rage,  
 That force controll'd not, nor could love assuage.

Friends now appear'd, but in the Man was seen  
he angry Maniac, with vindictive mien;  
Too late their pity gave to care and skill  
The hurried mind and ever-wandering will:  
Unnoticed pass'd all time, and not a ray  
Of reason broke on his benighted way;  
But now he spurn'd the straw in pure disdain,  
And now laugh'd loudly at the clinking chain.

Then, as its wrath subsided by degrees,  
The mind sank slowly to infantine ease,  
To playful folly, and to causeless joy,  
Speech without aim, and without end, employ;  
He drew fantastic figures on the wall,  
And gave some wild relation of them all;  
With brutal shape he join'd the human face,  
And idiot smiles approved the motley race.

Harmless at length th' unhappy man was found,  
The spirit settled, but the reason drown'd;  
And all the dreadful tempest died away  
To the dull stillness of the misty day.

And now his freedom he attain'd—if free  
The lost to reason, truth, and hope, can be;  
His friends, or wearied with the charge, or sure  
The harmless wretch was now beyond a cure,  
Gave him to wander where he pleased, and find  
His own resources for the eager mind:  
The playful children of the place he meets,  
Playful with them he rambles through the streets  
In all they need, his stronger arm he lends,  
And his lost mind to these approving friends.

That gentle Maid, whom once the Youth had  
Now with mild religious pity moved;

Kindly she chides his boyish flights, while he  
 Will for a moment fix'd and pensive be;  
 And as she trembling speaks, his lively eyes  
 Explore her looks, he listens to her sighs;  
 Charm'd by her voice, th' harmonious sounds invade  
 His clouded mind, and for a time persuade:  
 Like a pleased infant, who has newly caught  
 From the maternal glance a gleam of thought,  
 He stands enrapt, the half-known voice to hear,  
 And starts, half conscious, at the falling tear.

Rarely from town, nor then unwatch'd, he goes,  
 In darker mood, as if to hide his woes;  
 Returning soon, he with impatience seeks  
 His youthful friends, and shouts, and sings, and speaks;  
 Speaks a wild speech with action all as wild—  
 The children's leader, and himself a child;  
 He spins their top, or, at their bidding, bends  
 His back, while o'er it leap his laughing friends;  
 Simple and weak, he acts the boy once more,  
 And heedless children call him *Silly Shore*.

#### X. PHOEBE DAWSON

TWO summers since, I saw at Lammas Fair,  
 The sweetest flower that ever blossom'd there,  
 When *Phoebe Dawson* gaily cross'd the Green,  
 In haste to see and happy to be seen;  
 Her airs, her manners, all who saw admired;  
 Courteous though coy, and gentle though retired:  
 The joy of youth and health her eyes display'd,  
 And ease of heart her every look convey'd;  
 A native skill her simple robes express'd,  
 As with untutor'd elegance she dress'd;  
 The lads around admired so fair a sight,



# ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

d Phoebe felt, and felt she gave, delight.  
 mirrors soon of every age she gain'd,  
 er beauty won them and her worth retain'd;  
 nvy itself could no contempt display,  
 hey wish'd her well, whom yet they wish'd away.  
 Correct in thought, she judg'd a servant's place  
 Preserved a rustic beauty from disgrace;  
 And yet on Sunday-eve, in freedom's hour,  
 With secret joy she felt that beauty's power,  
 When some proud bliss upon the heart would steal,  
 That, poor or rich, a beauty still must feel.

At length the youth ordain'd to move her breast,  
 Before the swains with bolder spirit press'd;  
 With looks less timid made his passion known,  
 And pleased by manners most unlike her own;  
 Loud though in love, and confident though young;  
 Fierce in his air, and voluble of tongue;  
 By trade a tailor, though, in scorn of trade,  
 He served the 'Squire, and brush'd the coat he made.  
 Yet now, would Phoebe her consent afford,  
 Her slave alone, again he'd mount the board;  
 With her should years of growing love be spent,  
 And growing wealth;—she sigh'd and look'd consent.

Now, through the lane, up hill, and 'cross the green  
 (Seen by but few, and blushing to be seen—  
 Dejected, thoughtful, anxious, and afraid,)  
 Led by the lover, walk'd the silent maid;  
 Slow through the meadows roved they, many a mil'  
 Toy'd by each bank, and trifled at each stile;  
 Where, as he painted every blissful view,  
 And highly colour'd what he strongly drew,  
 The pensive damsel, prone to tender fears,  
 Dimm'd the false prospect with prophetic tears.—

Thus pass'd th' allotted hours, till, lingering late,  
The lover loiter'd at the master's gate;  
There he pronounced adieu! and yet would stay,  
Till chidden—soothed—entreated—forced away;  
He would of coldness, though indulged, complain,  
And oft retire, and oft return again;  
When, if his teasing vex'd her gentle mind,  
The grief assumed, compell'd her to be kind!  
For he would proof of plighted kindness crave,  
That she resented first, and then forgave;  
And to his grief and penance yielded more  
Than his presumption had required before.

Ah! fly temptation, youth; refrain! refrain!  
Each yielding maid and each presuming swain!

Lo! now with red rent cloak and bonnet black,  
And torn green gown loose hanging at her back,  
One who an infant in her arms sustains,  
And seems in patience striving with her pains;  
Pinch'd are her looks, as one who pines for bread,  
Whose cares are growing and whose hopes are fled;  
Pale her parch'd lips, her heavy eyes sunk low,  
And tears unnoticed from their channels flow;  
Serene her manner, till some sudden pain  
Frets the meek soul, and then she's calm again;—  
Her broken pitcher to the pool she takes,  
And every step with cautious terror makes;  
For not alone that infant in her arms,  
But nearer cause, her anxious soul alarms.  
With water burthen'd, then she picks her way,  
Slowly and cautious, in the clinging clay;  
Till, in mid-green, she trusts a place unsound,  
And deeply plunges in th' adhesive ground;  
Thence, but with pain, her slender foot she takes,  
While hope the mind as strength the frame forsakes:



Till that fair form in want and sickness pined,  
And hope and comfort fled that gentle mind.  
Then fly temptation, you h; resist, refrain!  
Nor let me preach for ever and in vain!

## XI. THE WAGER

COUNTER and Clubb were men in trade, whose pains,  
Credit, and prudence, brought them constant gains;  
Partners and punctual, every friend agreed  
Counter and Clubb were men who must succeed.  
When they had fix'd some little time in life,  
Each thought of taking to himself a wife:  
As men in trade alike, as men in love,  
They seem'd with no according views to move:  
As certain ores in outward view the same,  
They show'd their difference when the magnet came.  
Counter was vain: with spirit strong and high,  
'T was not in him like suppliant swain to sigh:  
"His wife might o'er his men and maids preside,  
And in her province be a judge and guide;  
But what he thought, or did, or wish'd to do,  
She must not know, or censure if she knew;  
At home, abroad, by day, by night, if he  
On aught determin'd, so it was to be:  
How is a man", he ask'd, "for business fit,  
Who to a female can his will submit?  
Absent a while, let no inquiring eye  
Or plainer speech presume to question why:  
But all be silent; and, when seen again,  
Let all be cheerful---shall a wife complain?  
Friends I invite, and who shall dare t' object,  
Or look on them with coolness or neglect:  
No! I must ever of my house be head,  
And, thus obey'd, I condescend to wed."

Clubb heard the speech—"My friend is nice," said he;  
 A wife with less respect will do for me:  
 How is he certain such a prize to gain?  
 What he approves, a lass may learn to feign,  
 And so affect t' obey till she begins to reign;  
 A while complying, she may vary then,  
 And be as wives of more unwary men;  
 Beside, to him who plays such lordly part,  
 How shall a tender creature yield her heart;  
 Should he the promised confidence refuse,  
 She may another more confiding choose;  
 May show her anger, yet her purpose hide,  
 And wake his jealousy, and wound his pride.  
 In one so humbled, who can trace the friend?  
 I on an equal, not a slave, depend;  
 If true, my confidence is wisely placed,  
 And being false, she only is disgraced."

Clubb, with these notions, cast his eye around,  
 And one so easy soon a partner found.  
 The lady chosen was of good repute;  
 Meekness she had not, and was seldom mute;  
 Though quick to anger, still she loved to smile,  
 And would be calm if men would wait a while:  
 She knew her duty, and she loved her way,  
 More pleased in truth to govern than obey;  
 She heard her priest with reverence, and her son  
 As one who felt the pressure of her vows;  
 Useful and civil, all her friends confess'd—  
 Give her her way, and she would choose the  
 Though some indeed a sly remark would make  
 Give it her not, and she would choose to take

All this, when Clubb some cheerful mood  
 He saw, confess'd, and said he was content

Counter meantime selected, doubted, weigh'd,  
 And then brought home a young complying maid;  
 A tender creature, full of fears as charms,  
 A beauteous nursling from its mother's arms:  
 A soft, sweet blossom, such as men must love,  
 But to preserve must keep it in the stove:  
 She had a mild, subdued, expiring look—  
 Raise but the voice, and this fair creature shook;  
 Leave her alone, she felt a thousand fears—  
 'Hide, and she melted into floods of tears;  
 Fondly she pleaded, and would gently sigh,  
 For very pity, or she knew not why:  
 One whom to govern none could be afraid—  
 Hold up the finger, this meek thing obey'd;  
 Her happy husband had the easiest task—  
 Say but his will, no question would she ask;  
 She sought no reasons, no affairs she knew,  
 Of business spoke not, and had nought to do.

Oft he exclaim'd, "How meek! how mild! how kind!  
 With her 't were cruel but to seem unkind:  
 Though ever silent when I take my leave,  
 It pains my heart to think how hers will grieve;  
 'Tis heaven on earth with such a wife to dwell,  
 I am in raptures to have sped so well;  
 But let me not, my friend, your envy raise,  
 No! on my life, your patience has my praise."

His friend, though silent, felt the scorn implied—  
 "What need of patience?" to himself he cried:  
 "Better a woman o'er her house to rule,  
 Than a poor child just hurried from her school;  
 Who has no care, yet never lives at ease;  
 Unfit to rule, and indisposed to please.  
 What if he govern, there his boast should end:  
 No husband's power can make a slave his friend."



The best", he said, "was an obedient spouse,  
Such as my friend's—that every one allows:  
What if she wishes his designs to know?  
It is because she would her praise bestow;  
What if she wills that he remain at home?  
She knows that mischief may from travel come.  
I, who am free to venture where I please,  
Have no such kind preventing checks as these;  
But mine is double duty, first to guide  
Myself aright, then rule a house beside;  
While this our friend, more happy than the free,  
Resigns all power, and laughs at liberty."

"By Heaven!" said Clubb—"excuse me if I swear—  
I'll bet a hundred guineas, if he dare,  
That uncontroll'd I will such freedoms take  
That he will fear to equal—there's my stake."

"A match!" said Counter, much by wine inflam'd;  
"But we are friends—let smaller stake be named:  
Wine for our future meeting, that will I  
Take and no more—what peril shall we try?"  
"Let's to Newmarket," Clubb replied; "or choose  
Yourself the place, and what you like to lose;  
And he who first returns, or fears to go,  
Forfeits his cash."—Said Counter, "Be it so".

The friends around them saw with much delight  
The social war, and hail'd the pleasant night;  
Nor would they further hear the cause discuss'd,  
Afraid the recreant heart of Clubb to trust.

Now sober thoughts return'd as each withdrew,  
And of the subject took a serious view:  
"I was wrong," thought Counter, "and will grieve my  
love";



was wrong," thought Clubb, "my wife will not approve:  
 If friends were present; I must try the thing,  
 For with my folly half the town will ring."

He sought his lady—"Madame, I'm to blame,  
 But was reproach'd, and could not bear the shame;  
 Here in my folly—for 't is best to say  
 The very truth—I've sworn to have my way;  
 To that Newmarket—(though I hate the place,  
 And have no taste or talents for a race,  
 Yet so it is—well, now prepare to chide)—  
 I laid a wager that I dared to ride;  
 And I must go: by Heaven, if you resist  
 I shall be scorn'd, and ridiculed, and hiss'd;  
 Let me with grace before my friends appear,  
 You know the truth, and must not be severe:  
 He too must go, but that he will of course:  
 Do you consent?—I never think of force."

"You never need," the worthy dame replied;  
 "The husband's honour is the woman's pride:  
 If I in trifles be the wilful wife,  
 Still for your credit I would lose my life.  
 Go! and when fix'd the day of your return,  
 Stay longer yet, and let the blockheads learn  
 That though a wife may sometimes wish to rule,  
 She would not make th' indulgent man a fool;  
 I would at times advise—but idle they  
 Who think th' assenting husband *must* obey."

The happy man, who thought his lady right  
 In other cases, was assured to-night;  
 Then for the day with proud delight prepared,  
 To show his doubting friends how much he dared

Counter--who grieving sought his bed, his rest  
 Broken by pictures of his love distress'd--  
 With soft and winning speech the fair prepared:  
 "She all his counsels, comforts, pleasures shared:  
 She was assured he loved her from his soul,  
 She never knew and need not fear control;  
 But so it happen'd—he was grieved at heart,  
 It happen'd so, that they awhile must part—  
 A little time—the distance was but short,  
 And business call'd him—he despised the sport;  
 But to Newmarket he engaged to ride  
 With his friend Clubb": and there he stopp'd and sigh'd.

Awhile the tender creature look'd dismay'd,  
 Then floods of tears the call of grief obey'd: -

"She an objection! No!" she sobb'd, "not one;  
 Her work was finish'd, and her race was run,  
 For die she must, indeed she would not live  
 A week alone, for all the world could give;  
 He too must die in that same wicked place;  
 It always happen'd -was a common case;  
 Among those horrid horses, jockeys, crowds,  
 'Twas certain death—they might bespeak their shrouds:  
 He would attempt a race, be sure to fall  
 And she expire with terror that was all:  
 With love like hers she was indeed unfit  
 To bear such horrors, but she must submit."

"But for three days, my love! three days at most."  
 "Enough for me; I then shall be a ghost."  
 "My honour's pledged!"—"Oh! yes, my dearest life,  
 I know your honour must outweigh your wife;  
 But ere this absence have you sought a friend?  
 I shall be dead--on whom can you depend?  
 Let me one favour of your kindness crave,  
 Grant me the stone I mention'd for my grave."



Yours is the triumph, be you so inclined;  
But you are too considerate and kind:  
In tender pity to my Juliet's fears  
I thus relent, o'ercome by love and tears:  
She knows your kindness: I have heard her say,  
A man like you 't is pleasure to obey:  
Each faithful wife, like ours, must disapprove  
Such dangerous trifling with connubial love;  
What has the idle world, my friend, to do  
With our affairs? they envy me and you:  
What if I could my gentle spouse command—  
Is that a cause I should her tears withstand?  
And what if you, a friend of peace, submit  
To one you love—is that a theme for wit?  
"T was wrong, and I shall henceforth judge it weak  
Both of submission and control to speak:  
Be it agreed that all contention cease,  
And no such follies vex our future peace;  
Let each keep guard against domestic strife,  
And find nor slave nor tyrant in his wife."

"Agreed," said Clubb, "with all my soul agreed";—  
And to the boy, delighted, gave his steed.  
"I think my friend has well his mind express'd,  
And I assent; such things are not a jest."  
"True," said the wife, "no longer he can hide  
The truth that pains him by his wounded pride:  
Your friend has found it not an easy thing,  
Beneath his yoke this yielding soul to bring:  
These weeping willows, though they seem inclined  
By every breeze, yet not the strongest wind  
Can from their bent divert this weak but stubborn k:  
Drooping they seek your pity to excite,  
But 't is at once their nature and delight:  
Such women feel not, while they sigh and w

"Nay, love, attend—why, bless my soul—I say  
I will return—there—weep no longer—nay!"

"Well! I obey, and to the last am true,  
But spirits fail me; I must die; adieu!"

"What, Madam! must?—'t is wrong—I'm angry—  
zounds!

Can I remain and lose a thousand pounds?"

"Go then, my love! it is a monstrous sum,  
Worth twenty wives—go, love! and I am dumb;  
Nor be displeased—had I the power to live,  
You might be angry, now you must forgive:  
Alas! I faint—ah! cruel—there's no need  
Of wounds or fevers—this has done the deed."

The lady fainted, and the husband sent  
For every aid, for every comfort went;  
Strong terror seized him: "Oh! she loved so well,  
And who th' effect of tenderness could tell?"

She now recover'd, and again began  
With accent querulous—"Ah! cruel man!"  
Till the sad husband, conscience-struck, confess'd,  
'T was very wicked with his friend to jest;  
For now he saw that those who were obey'd,  
Could like the most subservient feel afraid:  
And though a wife might not dispute the will  
Of her liege lord, she could prevent it still.

The morning came, and Clubb prepared to ride  
With a smart boy, his servant, and his guide;  
When, ere he mounted on his ready steed,  
Arrived a letter, and he stopp'd to read.

"My friend," he read, "our journey I decline  
A heart too tender for such strife is mine;



is but their habit—their affections sleep;  
hey are like ice that in the hand we hold,  
so very melting, yet so very cold;  
On such affection let not man rely,  
The husbands suffer, and the ladies sigh:  
But your friend's offer let us kindly take,  
And spare his pride for his vexation's sake;  
For he has found, and through his life will find,  
'T is easiest dealing with the firmest mind—  
More just when it resists, and, when it yields, more  
kind."

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## WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

(1770-1850)

### XII. MARGARET

It was a plot  
Of garden-ground run wild, its matted weeds  
Marked with the steps of those, whom, as they pass'd  
The gooseberry trees that shot in long lank slips,  
Or currants, hanging from their leafless stems  
In scanty strings, had tempted to o'erleap  
The broken wall. I looked around, and there,  
Where two tall hedgerows of thick alder boughs  
Joined in a cold damp nook, espied a well  
Shrouded with willow-flowers and plummy fern,  
My thirst I slaked, and from the cheerless spot  
Withdrawing, straightway to the shade returned  
Where sate the old man on the cottage bench;  
And while, beside him, with uncovered head,  
I yet was standing, freely to respire,  
And cool my temples in the fanning air,  
Thus did he speak—"I see around me here

A worse affliction in the plague of war;  
This happy land was stricken to the heart!  
A wanderer then among the cottages  
I, with my freight of winter raiment, saw  
The hardships of that season; many rich  
Sank down, as in a dream, among the poor;  
And of the poor did many cease to be,  
And their place knew them not. Meanwhile, abridged  
Of daily comforts, gladly reconciled  
To numerous self-denials, Margaret  
Went struggling on through those calamitous years  
With cheerful hope, until the second autumn,  
When her life's helpmate on a sick-bed lay,  
Smitten with perilous fever. In disease  
He lingered long; and when his strength returned,  
He found the little he had stored, to meet  
The hour of accident or crippling age,  
Was all consumed. A second infant now  
Was added to the troubles of a time  
Laden, for them and all of their degree,  
With care and sorrow; shoals of artisans  
From ill-requited labour turned adrift  
Sought daily bread from public charity,  
They, and their wives and children—happier far  
Could they have lived as do the little birds  
That peck along the hedgerows, or the kite  
That makes her dwelling on the mountain rocks.

“A sad reverse it was for him who long  
Had filled with plenty, and possessed in peace,  
This lonely cottage. At his door he stood,  
And whistled many a snatch of merry tunes  
That had no mirth in them: or with his knife  
Carved uncouth figures on the heads of sticks—  
Then, not less idly, sought, through every nook.





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e or garden, any casual work  
 or ornament; and with a strange,  
 ig, yet uneasy novelty,  
 ended, where he might, the various tasks  
 nmer, autumn, winter, and of spring.  
 his endured not; his good humour soon  
 me a weight in which no pleasure was;  
 . poverty brought on a petted mood  
 d a sore temper: day by day he drooped,  
 d he would leave his work—and to the town,  
 ithout an errand, would direct his steps,  
 r wander here and there among the fields.  
 ne while he would speak lightly of his babes,  
 and with a cruel tongue: at other times  
 He tossed them with a false unnatural joy,  
 And 't was a rueful thing to see the looks  
 Of the poor innocent children. 'Every smile',  
 Said Margaret to me, here beneath these trees,  
 'Made my heart bleed.'"

At this the Wanderer paused:  
 And, looking up to those enormous elms,  
 He said: "'T is now the hour of deepest noon.  
 At this still season of repose and peace,  
 This hour, when all things which are not at rest  
 Are cheerful; while this multitude of flies  
 Is filling all the air with melody;  
 Why should a tear be in an old man's eye?  
 Why should we thus, with an untoward mind,  
 And in the weakness of humanity,  
 From natural wisdom turn our hearts away,  
 To natural comfort shut our eyes and ears,  
 And, feeding on disquiet, thus disturb  
 The calm of nature with our restless thoughts?"  
 He spake with somewhat of a solemn tone:

But, when he ended, there was in his face  
Such easy cheerfulness, a look so mild,  
That for a little time it stole away  
All recollection, and that simple tale  
Passed from my mind like a forgotten sound.  
A while on trivial things we held discourse,  
To me soon tasteless. In my own despite,  
I thought of that poor woman as of one  
Whom I had known and loved. He had rehearsed  
Her homely tale with such familiar power,  
With such an active countenance, an eye  
So busy, that the things of which he spake  
Seemed present; and, attention now relaxed,  
A heart-felt chillness crept along my veins.  
I rose; and, having left the breezy shade,  
Stood drinking comfort from the warmer sun,  
That had not cheered me long—ere, looking round  
Upon that tranquil ruin, I returned,  
And begged of the old man that, for my sake,  
He would resume his story.

He replied,

“It were a wantonness, and would demand  
Severe reproof, if we were men whose hearts  
Could hold vain dalliance with the misery  
Even of the dead; contented thence to draw  
A momentary pleasure, never marked  
By reason, barren of all future good.  
But we have known that there is often found  
In mournful thoughts, and always might be found,  
A power to virtue friendly: were’t not so,  
I am a dreamer among men, indeed  
An idle dreamer! ’Tis a common tale,  
An ordinary sorrow of man’s life,  
A tale of silent suffering, hardly clothed

In bodily form.—But, without further bidding,  
I will proceed.

“While thus it fared with them,  
To whom this cottage, till those hapless years,  
Had been a blessed home, it was my chance  
To travel in a country far remote;  
And when these lofty elms once more appeared,  
What pleasant expectations lured me on  
O’er the flat common!—With quick step I reached  
The threshold, lifted with light hand the latch;  
But, when I entered, Margaret looked at me  
A little while; then turned her head away  
Speechless,—and, sitting down upon a chair,  
Wept bitterly. I wist not what to do,  
Or how to speak to her. Poor wretch! at last  
She rose from off her seat, and then,—O sir!  
I cannot *tell* how she pronounced my name,—  
With fervent love, and with a face of grief  
Unutterably helpless, and a look  
That seemed to cling upon me, she inquired  
If I had seen her husband. As she spake  
A strange surprise and fear came to my heart,  
Nor had I power to answer ere she told  
That he had disappeared—not two months gone.  
He left his house: two wretched days had passed  
And on the third, as wistfully she raised  
Her head from off her pillow, to look forth,  
Like one in trouble, for returning light,  
Within her chamber-casement she espied  
A folded paper, lying as if placed  
To meet her waking eyes. This tremblingly  
She opened—found no writing, but beheld  
Pieces of money carefully enclosed,  
Silver and gold.—‘I shuddered at the sight’;

Said Margaret, 'for I knew it was his hand  
Which placed it there: and ere that day was ended,  
That long and anxious day! I learned from one  
Sent hither by my husband to impart  
The heavy news, that he had joined a troop  
Of soldiers going to a distant land.  
He left me thus—he could not gather heart  
To take a farewell of me; for he feared  
That I should follow with my babes, and sink  
Beneath the misery of that wandering life.'

"This tale did Margaret tell with many tears;  
And, when she ended, I had little power  
To give her comfort, and was glad to take  
Such words of hope from her own mouth as served  
To cheer us both:—but long we had not talked  
Ere we built up a pile of better thoughts,  
And with a brighter eye she looked around  
As if she had been shedding tears of joy.  
We parted.—'T was the time of early spring;  
I left her busy with her garden tools;  
And well remember, o'er that fence she looked,  
And, while I paced along the footway path,  
Called out, and sent a blessing after me,  
With tender cheerfulness; and with a voice  
That seemed the very sound of happy thoughts.

"I roved o'er many a hill and many a dale,  
With my accustomed load; in heat and cold,  
Through many a wood, and many an open ground,  
In sunshine and in shade, in wet and fair.  
Drooping or blithe of heart, as might befall;  
My best companions now the driving winds,  
And now the 'trotting brooks' and whispering trees,  
And now the music of my own sad steps.  
With many a short-lived thought that passed between,

nd disappeared.—I journeyed back this way,  
 /hen, in the warmth of midsummer, the wheat  
 Vas yellow; and the soft and bladed grass,  
 Springing afresh, had o'er the hay-field spread  
 Its tender verdure. At the door arrived,  
 I found that she was absent. In the shade  
 Where now we sit, I waited her return.  
 Her cottage, then a cheerful object, wore  
 Its customary look,—only, it seemed,  
 The honeysuckle, crowding round the porch,  
 Hung down in heavier tufts: and that bright weed,  
 The yellow stonecrop, suffered to take root  
 Along the window's edge, profusely grew,  
 Blinding the lower panes. I turned aside,  
 And strolled into her garden. It appeared  
 To lag behind the season, and had lost  
 Its pride of neatness. Daisy-flowers and thrift  
 Had broken their trim lines, and straggled o'er  
 The paths they used to deck:—carnations, once  
 Prized for surpassing beauty, and no less  
 For the peculiar pains they had required,  
 Declined their languid heads, without support.  
 The cumbrous bind-weed, with its wreaths and bells,  
 Had twined about her two small rows of pease,  
 And dragged them to the earth.—Ere this an hour  
 Had wasted.—Back I turned my restless steps;  
 A stranger passed; and guessing whom I sought,  
 He said that she was used to ramble far.  
 The sun was sinking in the west; and now  
 I sate with sad impatience. From within  
 Her solitary infant cried aloud;  
 Then, like a blast that dies away self-willed,  
 The voice was silent. From the bench I rose;  
 But neither could divert nor soothe my thought  
 The spot, though fair, was very desolate—

The longer I remained more desolate:—  
And, looking round me, now I first observed  
The corner stones, on either side the porch,  
With dull red stains discoloured, and stuck o'er  
With tufts and hairs of wool, as if the sheep,  
That fed upon the common, thither came  
Familiarly; and found a couching-place  
Even at her threshold. Deeper shadows fell  
From these tall elms;—the cottage-clock struck eight;—  
I turned, and saw her distant a few steps.  
Her face was pale and thin, her figure too  
Was changed. As she unlocked the door, she said,  
'It grieves me you have waited here so long,  
But, in good truth, I've wandered much of late  
And, sometimes—to my shame I speak—have need  
Of my best prayers to bring me back again.'  
While on the board she spread our evening meal,  
She told me—interrupting not the work  
Which gave employment to her listless hands—  
That she had parted with her elder child;  
To a kind master on a distant farm  
Now happily apprenticed,—'I perceive  
You look at me, and you have cause; to-day  
I have been travelling far; and many days  
About the fields I wander, knowing this  
Only, that what I seek I cannot find;  
And so I waste my time: for I am changed;  
And to myself', said she, 'have done much wrong  
And to his helpless infant. I have slept  
Weeping, and weeping have I waked; my tears  
Have flowed as if my body were not such  
As others are; and I could never die.  
But I am now in mind and in my heart  
More easy; and I hope', said she, 'that Heaven  
Will give me patience to endure the things



'Which I behold at home.' It would have grieved  
 Your very soul to see her; sir, I feel  
 The story linger in my heart; I fear  
 'Tis long and tedious; but my spirit clings  
 To that poor woman:—so familiarly  
 Do I perceive her manner, and her look,  
 And presence, and so deeply do I feel  
 Her goodness, that, not seldom, in my walks  
 A momentary trance comes over me;  
 And to myself I seem to muse on one  
 By sorrow laid asleep;—or borne away,  
 A human being destined to awake  
 To human life, or something very near  
 To human life, when he shall come again  
 For whom she suffered. Yes, it would have grieved  
 Your very soul to see her: evermore  
 Her eyelids drooped, her eyes were downward cast;  
 And, when she at her table gave me food,  
 She did not look at me. Her voice was low,  
 Her body was subdued. In every act  
 Pertaining to her house affairs, appeared  
 The careless stillness of a thinking mind  
 Self-occupied: to which all outward things  
 Are like an idle matter. Still she sighed,  
 And yet no motion of the breast was seen,  
 No heaving of the heart. While by the fire  
 We sate together, sighs came on my ear,  
 I knew not how, and hardly whence they came.

"Ere my departure, to her care I gave,  
 For her son's use, some tokens of regard,  
 Which with a look of welcome she received;  
 And I exhorted her to place her trust  
 In God's good love, and seek his help by prayer.  
 I took my staff, and when I kissed her babe

The tears stood in her eyes. I left her then  
With the best hope and comfort I could give;  
She thanked me for my wish;—but for my hope  
Methought she did not thank me.

“I returned,  
And took my rounds along this road again  
Ere on its sunny bank the primrose flower  
Peeped forth, to give an earnest of the spring.  
I found her sad and drooping; she had learned  
No tidings of her husband; if he lived,  
She knew not that he lived; if he were dead,  
She knew not he was dead. She seemed the same  
In person and appearance: but her house  
Bespake a sleepy hand of negligence;  
The floor was neither dry nor neat, the hearth  
Was comfortless, and her small lot of books,  
Which, in the cottage window, heretofore  
Had been piled up against the corner panes  
In seemly order, now, with straggling leaves  
Lay scattered here and there, open or shut,  
As they had chanced to fall. Her infant babe  
Had from its mother caught the trick of grief,  
And sighed among its playthings. Once again  
I turned towards the garden gate, and saw,  
More plainly still, that poverty and grief  
Were now come nearer to her: weeds defaced  
The hardened soil, and knots of withered grass:  
No ridges there appeared of clear black mould,  
No winter greenness: of her herbs and flowers,  
It seemed the better part were gnawed away  
Or trampled into earth: a chain of straw,  
Which had been twined about the slender stem  
Of a young apple-tree, lay at its root.  
The bark was nibbled round by truant sheep.

Margaret stood near, her infant in her arms,  
And, noting that my eye was on the tree,  
He said, 'I fear it will be dead and gone  
Ere Robert come again'. Towards the house  
Together we returned; and she inquired  
If I had any hope:—but for her babe  
And for her little orphan boy, she said,  
She had no wish to live, that she must die  
Of sorrow. Yet I saw the idle loom  
Still in its place; his Sunday garments hung  
Upon the self-same nail; his very staff  
Stood undisturbed behind the door. And when,  
In bleak December, I retraced this way,  
She told me that her little babe was dead,  
And she was left alone. She now, released  
From her maternal cares, had taken up  
The employment common through these wilds, and  
gained  
By spinning hemp a pittance for herself,  
And for this end had hired a neighbour's boy  
To give her needful help. That very time  
Most willingly she put her work aside,  
And walked with me along the miry road,  
Heedless how far; and in such piteous sort  
That any heart had ached to hear her; begged  
That, wheresoe'er I went, I still would ask  
For him whom she had lost. We parted then—  
Our final parting; for from that time forth  
Did many seasons pass ere I returned  
Into this tract again.

“Nine tedious years;  
From their first separation, nine long years,  
She lingered in unquiet widowhood;  
• if • and widow. Needs must it have been

A sore heart-wasting. I have heard, my friend,  
That in yon arbour oftentimes she sate  
Alone, through half the vacant Sabbath-day;  
And, if a dog passed by, she still would quit  
The shade, and look abroad. On this old bench  
For hours she sate; and evermore her eye  
Was busy in the distance, shaping things  
That made her heart beat quick. You see that path,  
Now faint,—the grass has crept o'er its gray line;  
There, to and fro, she paced through many a day  
Of the warm summer, from a belt of hemp  
That girt her waist, spinning the long-drawn thread  
With backward steps. Yet ever as there passed  
A man whose garments showed the soldier's red,  
Or crippled mendicant in sailor's garb,  
The little child who sate to turn the wheel  
Ceased from his task; and she with faltering voice  
Made many a fond inquiry; and when they,  
Whose presence gave no comfort, were gone by,  
Her heart was still more sad. And by yon gate,  
That bars the traveller's road, she often stood,  
And when a stranger horseman came, the latch  
Would lift, and in his face look wistfully:  
Most happy, if, from aught discovered there  
Of tender feeling, she might dare repeat  
The same sad question. Meanwhile her poor hut  
Sank to decay: for he was gone whose hand,  
At the first nipping of October frost,  
Closed up each chink, and with fresh bands of straw  
Chequered the green-grown thatch. And so she lived  
Through the long winter, reckless and alone;  
Until her house by frost, and thaw, and rain,  
Was rapped: and while she slept, the nightly damps  
Did chill her breast: and in the stormy day  
Her tattered clothes were ruffled by the wind:

## ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

ven at the side of her own fire. Yet still  
he loved this wretched spot, nor would for worlds  
Have parted hence; and still that length of road,  
and this rude bench, one torturing hope endeared,  
Fast rooted at her heart; and here, my friend,  
In sickness she remained; and here she died,  
Last human tenant of these ruined walls."

The old man ceased: he saw that I was moved;  
From that low bench, rising instinctively  
I turned aside in weakness, nor had power  
To thank him for the tale which he had told.  
I stood, and leaning o'er the garden wall,  
Reviewed that woman's sufferings; and it seemed  
To comfort me while with a brother's love  
I blessed her—in the impotence of grief.  
At length towards the cottage I returned  
Fondly,—and traced, with interest more mild,  
That secret spirit of humanity  
Which, 'mid the calm oblivious tendencies  
Of nature, 'mid her plants, and weeds, and flowers,  
And silent overgrowings, still survived.  
The old man, noting this, resumed, and said,  
"My friend! enough to sorrow you have given,  
The purposes of wisdom ask no more;  
Be wise and cheerful; and no longer read  
The forms of things with an unworthy eye.  
She sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is here.  
I well remember that those very plumes,  
Those weeds, and the high spear-grass on that wall  
By mist and silent rain-drops silvered o'er,  
As once I passed, did to my heart convey  
So still an image of tranquillity,  
So calm and still, and looked so beautiful  
Amid the uneasy thoughts which filled my mind,

That what we feel of sorrow and despair  
From ruin and from change, and all the grief  
The passing shows of being leave behind,  
Appeared an idle dream that could not live  
Where meditation was. I turned away,  
And walked along my road in happiness."

He ceased. Ere long the sun declining shot  
A slant and mellow radiance, which began  
To fall upon us, while, beneath the trees,  
We sate on that low bench: and now we felt,  
Admonished thus, the sweet hour coming on.  
A linnet warbled from those lofty elms,  
A thrush sang loud, and other melodies,  
At distance heard, peopled the milder air.  
The old man rose, and, with a sprightly mien  
Of hopeful preparation, grasped his staff:  
Together casting then a farewell look  
Upon those silent walls, we left the shade;  
And, ere the stars were visible, had reached  
A village inn,—our evening resting-place.

### XIII. MICHAEL: A PASTORAL POEM

[ If from the public way you turn your steps  
Up the tumultuous brook of Green head Ghyll,  
You will suppose that with an upright path  
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent  
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.  
But, courage! for around that boisterous brook  
The mountains have all opened out themselves,  
And made a hidden valley of their own.  
No habitation can be seen: but they  
Who journey thither find themselves alone  
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites

# ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

t overhead are sailing in the sky.  
 : in truth an utter solitude;  
 r should I have made mention of this dell  
 t for one object which you might pass by, <sup>122</sup>  
 ight see and notice not. Beside the brook  
 ppears a straggling heap of unhewn stones! <sup>123</sup>  
 nd to that place a story appertains,  
 Which, though it be ungarnished with events,  
 Is not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,  
 Or for the summer shade. It was the first  
 Of those domestic tales that spake to me  
 Of shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men  
 Whom I already loved; not verily  
 For their own sakes, but for the fields and hill  
 Where was their occupation and abode,  
 And hence this tale, while I was yet a boy  
 Careless of books, yet having felt the power  
 Of nature, by the gentle agency <sup>124</sup>  
 Of natural objects led me on to feel  
 For passions that were not my own, and think  
 (At random and imperfectly indeed)  
 On man, the heart of man, and human life.  
 Therefore, although it be a history  
 Homely and rude, I will relate the same  
 For the delight of a few natural hearts; <sup>125</sup>  
 And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake  
 Of youthful poets, who among these hills  
 Will be my second self when I am gone.

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale  
 There dwelt a shepherd, Michael was his name;  
 An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb,  
 His bodily frame had been from youth to age  
 Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,  
 Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,

And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt  
And watchful more than ordinary men.  
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,  
Of blasts of every tone; and, oftentimes,  
When others heeded not, he heard the south  
Make subterraneous music, like the noise  
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.  
The shepherd, at such warning, of his flock  
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,  
"The winds are now devising work for me!"  
And, truly, at all times, the storm—that drives  
The traveller to a shelter—summoned him  
Up to the mountains: he had been alone  
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,  
That came to him and left him on the heights.  
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.  
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose  
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,  
Were things indifferent to the shepherd's thoughts.  
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed  
The common air; the hills, which he so oft  
Had climbed with vigorous steps; which had im-  
pressed  
So many incidents upon his mind  
Of hard-ship, skill or courage, joy or fear;  
Which like a book preserved the memory  
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,  
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts,  
So grateful in themselves, the certainty  
Of honourable gain: these fields, these hills,  
Which were his living being, even more  
Than his own blood—what could they less? had laid  
Strong hold on his affections, were to him  
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,  
The pleasure which there is in life itself.



# ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

His days had not been passed in singleness.  
 His helpmate was a comely matron, old—  
 Though younger than himself full twenty years.  
 She was a woman of a stirring life,  
 Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had  
 Of antique form, this large for spinning wool,  
 That small for flax; and if one wheel had rest  
 It was because the other was at work.  
 The pair had but one inmate in their house,  
 An only child, who had been born to them  
 When Michael, telling o'er his years, began  
 To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase,  
 With one foot in the grave. This only son,  
 With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,  
 The one of an inestimable worth,  
 Made all their household. I may truly say,  
 That they were as a proverb in the vale  
 For endless industry. When day was gone,  
 And from their occupations out of doors  
 The son and father were come home, even then,  
 Their labour did not cease; unless when all  
 Turned to their cleanly supper-board, and there,  
 Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk  
 Sat round their basket piled with oaten cakes,  
 And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when their m  
 Was ended, Luke (for so the son was named)  
 And his old father both betook themselves  
 To such convenient work as might employ  
 Their hands by the fireside; perhaps to card  
 Wool for the housewife's spindle, or repair  
 Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,  
 Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling by the chimney's edge  
 That in our ancient uncouth country style

Did with a huge projection overbrow  
Large space beneath, as duly as the light  
Of day grew dim the housewife hung a lamp:  
An aged utensil, which had performed  
Service beyond all others of its kind.  
Early at evening did it burn and late,  
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,  
Which going by from year to year had found  
And left the couple neither gay perhaps  
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,  
Living a life of eager industry.  
And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,  
There by the light of this old lamp they sat,  
Father and son, while late into the night  
The housewife plied her own peculiar work,  
Making the cottage through the silent hours  
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.  
This light was famous in its neighbourhood,  
And was a public symbol of the life  
The thrifty pair had lived. For, as it chanced,  
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground  
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,  
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,  
And westward to the village near the lake;  
And from this constant light, so regular  
And so far seen, the house itself, by all  
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,  
Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR

Thus living on through such a length of years,  
The shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs  
Have loved his helpmate; but to Michael's heart  
This son of his old age was yet more dear—  
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same  
Good spirit, which is in the blood of all—

# ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

an that a child, more than all other gifts,  
 ngs hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,  
 nd stirrings of inquietude, when they  
 y tendency of nature needs must fail.  
 Exceeding was the love he bare to him,  
 His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes  
 Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,  
 Had done him female service, not alone  
 For pastime and delight, as is the use  
 Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced  
 To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked  
 His cradle with a woman's gentle hand.

And, in a later time, ere yet the boy  
 Had put on boy's attire, did Michael's love,  
 Albeit of a stern unbending mind,  
 To have the young one in his sight, when he  
 Had work by his own door, or when he sat  
 With sheep before him on his shepherd's stool,  
 Beneath that large old oak, which near their door  
 Stood,—and, from its enormous breadth of shade,  
 Chosen for the shearer's covert from the sun,  
 Thence in our rustic dialect was called  
 The CLIPPING TREE, a name which yet it bears.  
 There, while they two were sitting in the shade  
 With others round them, earnest all and blithe,  
 Would Michael exercise his heart with looks  
 Of fond correction and reproof bestowed  
 Upon the child, if he disturbed the sheep  
 By catching at their legs, or with his shouts  
 Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears

And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew  
 A healthy lad, and carried in his cheek  
 Two steady roses that were five years old,  
 "— Michael from a winter coppice cut

With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped  
With iron, making it throughout, in all  
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,  
And gave it to the boy: wherewith equipt  
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed  
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;  
And, to his office prematurely called,  
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,  
Something between a hindrance and a help;  
And for this course not always, I believe,  
Receiving from his father hire of praise:  
Though nought was left undone which staff or voice,  
Or looks, or threatening gestures could perform.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand  
Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights,  
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,  
He with his father daily went, and they  
Were as companions, why should I relate  
That objects which the shepherd loved before  
Were dearer now? that from the boy there came  
Feelings and emanations—things which were  
Light to the sun and music to the wind:  
And that the old man's heart seemed born again.  
Thus in his father's sight the boy grew up;  
And now when he had reached his eighteenth year,  
He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived  
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came  
Distressful tidings. Long before the time  
Of which I speak, the shepherd had been bound  
In surety for his brother's son, a man  
Of industrious life, and ample means—  
But whose ruin and misfortune suddenly  
Had got up on him,—and old Michael now

# ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

s summoned to discharge the forfeiture,  
 grievous penalty, but little less  
 an half his substance. This unlooked-for claim  
 t the first hearing, for a moment took  
 fore hope out of his life than he supposed  
 hat any old man ever could have lost.  
 As soon as he had gathered so much strength  
 That he could look his trouble in the face,  
 It seemed that his sole refuge was to sell  
 A portion of his patrimonial fields.  
 Such was his first resolve; he thought again,  
 And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,  
 Two evenings after he had heard the news,  
 "I have been toiling more than seventy years,  
 And in the open sunshine of God's love  
 Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours  
 Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think  
 That I could not lie quiet in my grave.  
 Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself  
 Has scarcely been more diligent than I;  
 And I have lived to be a fool at last  
 To my own family. An evil man  
 That was, and made an evil choice, if he  
 Were false to us; and if he were not false,  
 There are ten thousand to whom loss like this  
 Had been no sorrow. I forgive him—but  
 'T were better to be dumb than to talk thus.  
 When I began, my purpose was to speak  
 Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.  
 Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land  
 Shall not go from us, and it shall be free;  
 He shall possess it free as is the wind  
 That passes over it. We have, thou knowest,  
 Another kinsman—he will be our friend  
 In this distress. He is a prosperous man,

Thriving in trade---and Luke to him shall go,  
And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift  
He quickly will repair this loss, and then  
May come again to us. If here he stay,  
What can be done? Where every one is poor,  
What can be gained?" At this the old man paused,  
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind  
Was busy, looking back into past times.  
There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,  
He was a parish-boy ---at the church-door  
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence,  
And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbours bought  
A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares;  
And with this basket on his arm, the lad  
Went up to London, found a master there,  
Who out of many chose the trusty boy  
To go and overlook his merchandise  
Beyond the seas: where he grew wondrous rich,  
And left estates and moneys to the poor,  
And at his birthplace built a chapel floored  
With marble, which he sent from foreign lands.  
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,  
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,  
And her face brightened. The old man was glad,  
And thus resumed:---"Well, Isabel! this scheme  
These two days has been meat and drink to me.  
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.  
We have enough.--I wish indeed that I  
Were younger, ---but this hope is a good hope.  
Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best  
Pay for him more, and let us send him forth  
To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:  
It be ever, go, the boy should go to-night."  
Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth  
With a light heart. The housewife for five days

. restless morn and night, and all day long  
 ought on with her best fingers to prepare  
 ings needful for the journey of her son.  
 At Isabel was glad when Sunday came  
 o stop her in her work: for, when she lay  
 y Michael's side, she through the two last nights  
 heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep;  
 And when they rose at morning she could see  
 That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon  
 She said to Luke, while they two by themselves  
 Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go;  
 We have no other child but thee to lose,  
 None to remember—do not go away,  
 For if thou leave thy father he will die".  
 The youth made answer with a jocund voice;  
 And Isabel, when she had told her fears,  
 Recovered heart. That evening her best fare  
 Did she bring forth, and all together sat  
 Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work;  
 And all the ensuing week the house appeared  
 As cheerful as a grove in spring: at length  
 The expected letter from their kinsman came,  
 With kind assurances that he would do  
 His utmost for the welfare of the boy;  
 To which, requests were added, that forthwith  
 He might be sent to him. Ten times or more  
 The letter was read over; Isabel  
 Went forth to show it to the neighbours round;  
 Nor was there at that time on English land  
 A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel  
 Had to her house returned, the old man said,  
 "He shall depart to-morrow". To this word  
 The housewife answered, talking much of things

Which, if at such short notice he should go,  
Would surely be forgotten. But at length  
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,  
In that deep valley, Michael had designed  
To build a sheepfold: and, before he heard  
The tidings of his melancholy loss,  
For this same purpose he had gathered up  
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge  
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.  
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked:  
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped,  
And thus the old man spake to him:—"My son,  
To-morrow thou wilt leave me: with full heart  
I look upon thee, for thou art the same  
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,  
And all thy life hast been my daily joy.  
I will relate to thee some little part  
Of our two histories; 't will do thee good  
When thou art from me, even if I should speak  
Of things thou canst not know of. After thou  
First cam'st into the world—as oft befalls  
To new-born infants—thou didst sleep away  
Two days, and blessings from thy father's tongue  
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,  
And still I loved thee with increasing love.  
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds  
Than when I heard thee by our own fireside  
First uttering, without words, a natural tune;  
When thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy  
Sing at thy mother's breast. Month followed month,  
And in the open fields my life was passed  
And on the mountains, else I think that thou  
Hadt been brought up upon thy father's knees.



# ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

We were playmates, Luke: among these hills,  
 Well thou know'st, in us the old and young  
 We played together, nor with me didst thou  
 Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."  
 Luke had a manly heart; but at these words  
 He sobbed aloud. The old man grasped his hand,  
 And said, "Nay, do not take it so—I see  
 That these are things of which I need not speak.  
 Even to the utmost I have been to thee  
 A kind and a good father: and herein  
 I but repay a gift which I myself  
 Received at others' hands; for, though now old  
 Beyond the common life of man, I still  
 Remember them who loved me in my youth.  
 Both of them sleep together: here they lived  
 As all their forefathers had done; and when  
 At length their time was come, they were not loath  
 To give their bodies to the family mould.  
 I wished that thou shouldst live the life they lived.  
 But 't is a long time to look back, my son,  
 And see so little gain from threescore years.  
 These fields were burthened when they came to me;  
 Till I was forty years of age, not more  
 Than half of my inheritance was mine.  
 I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,  
 And till these three weeks past the land was free.  
 It looks as if it never could endure  
 Another master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,  
 If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good  
 That thou shouldst go." At this the old man paused  
 Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,  
 Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:  
 "This was a work for us; and now, my son,  
 It is a work for me. But, lay one stone—  
 Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.

Nay, boy, be of good hope:—we both may live  
To see a better day. At eighty-four  
I still am strong and hale:—do thou thy part,  
I will do mine.—I will begin again  
With many tasks that were resigned to thee;  
Up to the heights, and in among the storms,  
Will I without thee go again, and do  
All works which I was wont to do alone.  
Before I knew thy face. —Heaven bless thee, boy!  
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast  
With many hopes—It should be so—Yes—yes—  
I knew that thou couldst never have a wish  
To leave me, Luke: thou hast been bound to me  
Only by links of love: when thou art gone,  
What will be left to us!—But, I forget  
My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone.  
As I requested:—and hereafter, Luke,  
When thou art gone away, should evil men  
Be thy companions, think of me, my son,  
And of this moment: hither turn thy thoughts,  
And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear  
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou  
Mayst bear in mind the life thy fathers lived,  
Who, being innocent, did for that cause  
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—  
When thou return'st thou in this place wilt see  
A work which is not here; a covenant  
'T will be between us—But, whatever fate  
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,  
And bear thy memory with me to the grave."

The shepherd ended here: and Luke stooped down,  
And, as his father had requested, laid  
The first stone of the sheepfold. At the sight  
The old man's grief broke from him: to his heart

He pressed his son, he kissèd him and wept;  
And to the house together they returned.  
Hushed was that house in peace, or seeming peace,  
Ere the night fell:—with morrow's dawn the boy  
Began his journey, and when he had reached  
The public way, he put on a bold face;  
And all the neighbours as he passed their doors  
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,  
That followed him till he was out of sight.

A good report did from their kinsman come,  
Of Luke and his well-doing: and the boy  
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,  
Which, as the housewife phrased it, were throughout  
"The prettiest letters that were ever seen".  
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.  
So, many months passed on: and once again  
The shepherd went about his daily work  
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now  
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour  
He to that valley took his way, and there  
Wrought at the sheepfold. Meantime Luke began  
To slacken in his duty; and at length  
He in the dissolute city gave himself  
To evil courses: ignominy and shame  
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last  
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love;  
'T will make a thing endurable, which else  
Would overset the brain, or break the heart:  
I have conversed with more than one who well  
Remember the old man, and what he was  
Years after he had heard this heavy news.

He had been from youth to ag

Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks  
He went, and still looked up upon the sun,  
And listened to the wind; and as before  
Performed all kinds of labour for his sheep,  
And for the land his small inheritance.  
And to that hollow dell from time to time  
Did he repair, to build the fold of which  
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet  
The pity which was then in every heart  
For the old man—and 't is believed by all  
That many and many a day he thither went,  
And never lifted up a single stone.

There, by the sheepfold, sometimes was he seen  
Sitting alone, with that his faithful dog,  
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.  
The length of full seven years from time to time  
He at the building of this sheepfold wrought,  
And left the work unfinished when he died.  
Three years, or little more, did Isabel  
Survive her husband: at her death the estate  
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.  
The cottage which was named THE EVENING STAR  
Is gone—the ploughshare has been through the ground  
On which it stood; great changes have been wrought  
In all the neighbourhood:—yet the oak is left  
That grew beside their door: and the remains  
Of the unfinished sheepfold may be seen  
Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll.

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JOHN KEATS

(1796-1821)

XIV. LAMIA

PART I

UPON a time, before the faery broods  
 Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods  
 Before King Oberon's bright diadem,  
 Sceptre, and mantle, clasp'd with dewy gem,  
 Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns  
 From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslipp'd lawns,  
 The ever-smitten Hermes empty left  
 His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft:  
 From high Olympus had he stolen light,  
 On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight  
 Of his great summoner, and made retreat  
 Into a forest on the shores of Crete.  
 For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt  
 A Nymph, to whom all hoofed Satyrs knelt;  
 At whose white feet the languid Tritons pour'd  
 Pearls, while on land they wither'd and adored.  
 Fast by the springs where she to bathe was wont,  
 And in those meads where sometimes she might ha  
 Were strewn rich gifts, unknown to any Muse,  
 Though Fancy's casket were unlock'd to choose.  
 Ah! what a world of love was at her feet!  
 So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat  
 Burn'd from his winged heels to either ear,  
 That from a whiteness, as the lily clear,  
 Blush'd into roses 'mid his golden hair,  
 Fallen in jealous curls about his shoulders bare  
 From vale to vale, from wood to wood, he flew  
 " the flowers his passion new,

And wound with many a river to its head,  
To find where this sweet Nymph prepared her secret bed:  
In vain; the sweet Nymph might nowhere be found.  
And so he rested, on the lonely ground,  
Pensive, and full of painful jealousies  
Of the Wood-Gods, and even the very trees.  
There as he stood, he heard a mournful voice,  
Such as once heard, in gentle heart, destroys  
All pain but pity: thus the lone voice spake:  
"When from this wreathed tomb shall I awake!  
When move in a sweet body fit for life,  
And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife  
Of hearts and lips! Ah, miserable me!"  
The God, dove-footed, glided silently  
Round bush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed,  
The taller grasses and full-flowering weed,  
Until he found a palpitating snake,  
Bright, and cirque-couchant in a dusky brake.

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,  
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue:  
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,  
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson-barr'd;  
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,  
Dissolved, or brighter shone, or interwreath'd  
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries--  
So rainbow-sided, touch'd with miseries,  
She seem'd at once, some penanced lady elf,  
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.  
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire  
Spinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar:  
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!  
She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete:  
And for her eyes--what could such eyes do there  
But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair?

ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.  
Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake  
Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake,  
And thus; while Hermes on his pinions lay,  
Like a stoop'd falcon ere he takes his prey.

"Fair Hermes! crown'd with feathers, fluttering light,  
I had a splendid dream of thee last night;  
I saw thee sitting, on a throne of gold,  
Among the Gods, upon Olympus old,  
The only sad one; for thou didst not hear  
The soft, lute-finger'd Muses chanting clear,  
Nor even Apollo when he sang alone,  
Deaf to his throbbing throat's long, long melodious moan.  
I dreamt I saw thee, robed in purple flakes,  
Break amorous through the clouds, as morning breaks,  
And, swiftly as a bright Phœbean dart,  
Strike for the Cretan isle; and here thou art!  
Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid?  
Whereat the star of Lethe not delay'd  
His rosy eloquence, and thus inquired:  
"Thou smooth-lipp'd serpent, surely high-inspired!  
Thou beauteous wreath, with melancholy eyes,  
Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise,  
'Telling me only where my nymph is fled,—  
Where she doth breathe!" "Bright planet, thou hast  
Return'd the snake, "but seal with oaths, fair God

"I swear", said Hermes, "by my serpent rod,  
And by thine eyes, and by thy starry crown!"  
Light flew his earnest words, among the blossom  
Then thus again the brilliance feminine:

"Too frail of heart! for this lost nymph of  
As the air, invisibly, she strays  
Through the endless wilds; her pleasant day

She tastes unseen; unseen her nimble feet  
 Leave traces in the grass and flower-sweet;  
 From weary tendrils, and bow'd branches green,  
 She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen;  
 And by my power is her beauty veild  
 To keep it unaffronted, unassail'd  
 By the love-glances of unlovely eyes,  
 Of Satyrs, Fauns, and bearded Silenus' sighs.  
 Pale grew her immortality, for woe  
 Of all these lovers, and she grieved so  
 I took compassion on her, bade her steep  
 Her hair in weird syrops, that would keep  
 Her loveliness invisible, yet free  
 To wander as she loves, in liberty.  
 Thou shalt behold her, Hermes, thou alone,  
 If thou wilt, as thou swearest, grant my boon!"  
 Then, once again, the charmed God began  
 An oath, and through the serpent's ears it ran  
 Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.  
 Ravish'd she lifted her Circean head,  
 Blush'd a live damask, and swift-lipping said,  
 "I was a woman, let me have once more  
 A woman's shape, and charming as before.  
 I love a youth of Corinth—O the bliss!  
 Give me my woman's form, and place me where he is.  
 Stoop, Hermes, let me breathe up on thy brow,  
 And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now."  
 The God on half-shut feathers sank serene,  
 She breathed up on his eyes, and swift was seen,  
 Of both the guarded nymph now smiling on the green.  
 It was no dream; or, say a dream it was,  
 Real are the dreams of God, and one this was.  
 Their pleasure—in a home immortal dream  
 One warm, shield'd noon out, love's light, light  
 Dwell'd in the heart, and they were all the world.



hen, lighting on the printless verdure, turn'd  
 o the swoon'd serpent, and with languid arm,  
 Delicate, put to proof the lithe Caducean charm.  
 So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent  
 Full of adoring tears and blandishment,  
 And towards her stept: she, like a moon in wane,  
 Faded before him, cower'd, nor could restrain  
 Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower  
 That faints into itself at evening hour:  
 But the God fostering her chilled hand,  
 She felt the warmth, her eyelids open'd bland,  
 And, like new flowers at morning song of bees,  
 Bloom'd and gave up her honey to the lees.  
 Into the green-recessed woods they flew;  
 Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

Left to herself, the serpent now began  
 To change; her elfin blood in madness ran;  
 Her mouth foam'd, and the grass, therewith besprent,  
 Wither'd at dew so sweet and virulent;  
 Her eyes in torture fix'd, and anguish drear,  
 Hot, glazed, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,  
 Flash'd phosphor and sharp sparks, without one co-  
 tear.

The colours all inflamed throughout her train,  
 She writhed about, convulsed with scarlet pain:  
 A deep volcanian yellow took the place  
 Of all her milder-mooned body's grace;  
 And, as the lava ravishes the mead,  
 Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede:  
 Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bar  
 Eclipsed her crescents, and lick'd up her stars:  
 So that, in moments few, she was undrest  
 ' - sapphires, greens, and amethyst,  
 f all these bereft,

Nothing but pain and unbelief were left  
 Still bore her crown: that very M.D. as she  
 Melted and disappeared, would say:  
 And in the air, her new voice, hushed soft,  
 Cried, "Lycius! gentle Lycius!"—I am aloft  
 With the bright mist about the mountain-tops:  
 These words dissolved: O'er the forest heard no more.

Whither fled Lavinia, now a lady bright,  
A full blown beauty new and exquisite?  
She fled into that valley they pass o'er;  
Who go to Corinth from Cenchrea's shore;  
And rested at the foot of those wild hills,  
The rugged founts of the Parnassian rills,  
And of that other vale, whose barren bed  
Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack,  
South westward to Cleone. There she stood  
About a young bird's flutter from a wood,  
Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread,  
By a clear pool, wherein she panted  
To see herself escaped from so sore ill,  
While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.

Ah, happy Lycius! for she was a maid  
 More beautiful than ever twisted hair,  
 Or sigh'd, or blush'd, or on spring bosom'd,  
 Spread a green lark to the sunnily  
 A virgin pure & lip'd, yet in the lore  
 Of love deep learn'd to the red heart's core,  
 Not one hour old, yet of so gentle beam  
 To perplex the moon as might beguile  
 Define their pettish knots, and restrain  
 Their points of contact, and swift consentance;  
 Lark-like with the species clear, radiating  
 From its own glow at noon to the north,

# ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

ough in Cupid's college she had spent  
t days a lovely graduate, still unshent,  
kept his rosy terms in idle languishment.

Why this fair creature chose so fairly  
the wayside to linger, we shall see;  
At first 't is fit to tell how she could muse  
and dream, when in the serpent prison-house,  
Of all she list, strange or magnificent:  
How, ever, where she will'd, her spirit went;  
Whether to faint Elysium, or where  
Down through tress-lifting waves the Nereids fair  
Wind into Thetis' bower by many a pearly stair;  
Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine,  
Stretch'd out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine;  
Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine  
Mulciber's columns gleam in far piazzian line.  
And sometimes into cities she would send  
Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend;  
And once, while among mortals dreaming thus,  
She saw the young Corinthian Lycius  
Charioting foremost in the envious race,  
Like a young Jove with calm uneager face,  
And fell into a swooning love of him.  
Now on the moth-time of that evening dim  
He would return that way, as well she knew,  
To Corinth from the shore; for freshly blew  
The eastern soft wind, and his galley now  
Grated the quay-stones with her brazen prow  
In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle  
Fresh anchor'd; whither he had been awhile  
To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there  
Waits with high marble doors for blood and incense  
Jove heard his vows, and better'd his desire;  
For by some freakful chance he made retire

From his companions, and set forth to walk,  
 Perhaps grown wearied of their Corinth talk:  
 Over the solitary hills he fared,  
 Thoughtless, at first, but ere eve's star appear'd  
 His fantasy was lost, where reason fades,  
 In the calm'd twilight of Platonic shades.  
 Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near—  
 Close to her passing, in indifference drest,  
 His silent sandals swept the mossy green;  
 So neighbour'd to him, and yet so un-  
 She stood: he pass'd, shut up in mystery,  
 His mind wrapp'd like his mantle, while her eye  
 Follow'd his steps, and her neck regal white  
 Turn'd—syllabing thus, "Ah, Lycius bright!  
 And will you leave me on the hills alone?  
 Lycius look back," and he came pity shewn."  
 He did; not with cold wonder tearingly,  
 But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice,  
 For so delicious were the words she sung,  
 It seem'd he had lov'd them a whole summer long;  
 And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,  
 Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,  
 And still the cup was full, while he, afraid  
 Lest she should vanish ere his lip had paid  
 Due adoration, thus began to adore,  
 Her soft look growing cov, she saw his chain so sure  
 "Leave thee alone! Look back! Ah, Godde—"  
 "Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee"  
 For pity do not this sad heart belie  
 Even as thou vanishest so I shall die  
 Stay! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay!  
 To thy far wishes will thy streams obey  
 Stay! though the green-twaile the demand  
 Alone they can drink up the morning dew,  
 Though a descended Phœad, with not one

# ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

ine harmonious sisters keep in tune  
 spheres, and as thy silver proxy shine?  
 weetly to these ravish'd ears of mine  
 ie thy sweet greeting, that if thou shouldst fade.  
 y memory will waste me to a shade:—  
 r pity do not melt!"—"If I should stay",  
 id Lamia, "here, upon this floor of clay,  
 nd pain my steps upon these flowers too rough,  
 what canst thou say or do of charm enough  
 To dull the nice remembrance of my home?  
 Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam  
 Over these hills and vales, where no joy is,—  
 Empty of immortality and bliss!  
 Thou art a scholar, Lycius, and must know  
 That finer spirits cannot breathe below  
 In human climes, and live: Alas! poor youth,  
 What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe  
 My essence? What serener palaces,  
 Where I may all my many senses please,  
 And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts appease;  
 It cannot be—Adieu!" So said, she rose  
 Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose  
 The amorous promise of her lone complain,  
 Swoon'd murmuring of love, and pale with pain.  
 The cruel lady, without any show  
 Of sorrow for her tender favourite's woe,  
 But rather, if her eyes could brighter be,  
 With brighter eyes and slow amenity,  
 Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh  
 The life she had so tangled in her mesh:  
 And as he from one trance was wakening  
 Into another, she began to sing,  
 Happy in beauty, life, and love, and everything,  
 A song of love, too sweet for earthly lyres,  
 While, like held breath, the stars drew in their pantin



# ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

hrew the goddess off, and won his heart  
 re pleasantly by playing woman's part,  
 h no more awe than what her beauty gave.  
 at, while it smote, still guaranteed to save.  
 ycius to all made eloquent reply,  
 arrying to every word a twin-born sigh;  
 and last, pointing to Corinth, ask'd her sweet,  
 if 't was too far that night for her soft feet.  
 The way was short, for Lamia's eagerness  
 Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease  
 To a few paces; not at all surmised  
 By blinded Lycius, so in her comprised  
 They pass'd the city gates, he knew not how  
 So noiseless, and he never thought to know.

As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all,  
 Throughout her palaces imperial,  
 And all her populous streets and temples lewd,  
 Mutter'd, like tempest in the distance brew'd,  
 To the wide-spreaded night above her towers.  
 Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,  
 Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white,  
 Companion'd or alone; while many a light  
 Flared, here and there, from wealthy festivals,  
 And threw their moving shadows on the walls,  
 Or found them cluster'd in the corniced shade  
 Of some arch'd temple door, or dusky colonnade.

Muffling his face, of greeting friends in fear,  
 Her fingers he press'd hard, as one came near  
 With curl'd grey beard, sharp eyes, and smooth bald cr  
 Slow-stepp'd, and robed in philosophic gown:  
 Lycius shrank closer, as they met and past,  
 Into his mantle, adding wings to haste,  
 While hurried Lamia trembled: "Ah," said he,  
 "Why do you shudder, love, so ruefully?

Why does your tender palm dissolve in dew?"—  
 "I'm wearied," said fair Lamin: "tell me who  
 Is that old man?—I cannot bring to mind  
 His features;—Lycius? wherefore do you blind  
 Yourself from his quick eye?" Lycius replied,  
 "Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide  
 And good instructor; but to night he seems  
 The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dream".

While yet he spake they had arrived before  
 A pillar'd porch, with lofty portal door,  
 Where hung a silver lamp whose phosphor glow  
 Reflected in the flabbed steps below,  
 Mild as a star in water; for so new  
 And so unsullied was the marble hue,  
 So through the crystal polish, liquid fine,  
 Ran the dark vein, that none but feet divine  
 Could e'er have touch'd there. Sounds Arabian  
 Breathed from the hinges, as the ample span  
 Of the wide doors disclosed a place unknown  
 Some time to any, but those two alone,  
 And a few Persian mutes, who that same year  
 Were seen about the markets—none knew where  
 They could inhabit, the most curious  
 Were foil'd, who watch'd to trace them to their house:  
 And but the flutter winged verse must tell,  
 For truth's sake what was afterwards betel,  
 'T would humour many a heart to leave them thus  
 Shut from the busy world of more incredulous

## PART II

Love in a hut, with water and a crust,  
 Is—Love, forgive us!—cinders, ashes, dust;  
 Love in a palace is perhaps at last  
 More grievous torment than a hermit's fast:



ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

is a doubtful tale from faery land,  
I for the non-elect to understand.  
Lycius lived to hand his story down,  
might have given the moral a fresh frown,  
clench'd it quite: but too short was their bliss  
breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice hiss.  
sides, there, nightly, with terrific glare,  
ove, jealous grown of so complete a pair,  
lover'd and buzz'd his wings, with fearful roar,  
Above the lintel of their chamber door,  
And down the passage cast a glow upon the floor.

For all this came a ruin: side by side  
They were enthroned, in the even tide,  
Upon a couch, near to a curtaining  
Whose airy texture, from a golden string,  
Floated into the room, and let appear  
Unveil'd the summer heaven, blue and clear,  
Betwixt two marble shafts:—there they reposed,  
Where use had made it sweet, with eyelids closed,  
Saving a tithe which love still open kept,  
That they might see each other while they almost slept;  
When from the slope side of a suburb hill,  
Deafening the swallow's twitter, came a thrill  
Of trumpets—Lycius started—the sounds fled,  
But left a thought, a buzzing in his head.  
For the first time, since first he harbour'd in  
That purple-lined palace of sweet sin,  
His spirit pass'd beyond its golden bourn  
Into the noisy world almost forsworn.  
The lady, ever watchful, penetrant,  
Saw this with pain, so arguing a want  
Of something more, more than her empery  
Of joys; and she began to moan and sigh  
Because he mused beyond her, knowing well

at but a moment's then, he is present's presence still.  
 "Why do you sigh, fair creature?" why should he?  
 "Why, do you think?" returned the trembling;  
 "You have deserted me; where am I now?  
 Not in your heart while care weighs on your brow."  
 "No, no, you have deserted me; and I go  
 from your breast homeless: ay, it must be so."  
 He answer'd, bending to her open eye,  
 Where he was mirror'd small in paradise,—  
 "My silver planet, both of eye and mind!  
 Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,  
 While I am striving how to fill my heart  
 With deeper crimson, and a double smart?  
 How to entangle, trammel up and down  
 Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there,  
 Like the hid scent in an unbudged rose?"  
 Ay, a sweet kiss—you see your mighty power  
 My thoughts! shall I unveil them?—Listen then!  
 What mortal hath a prize, that other men  
 May be confounded and abash'd withal,  
 But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestic,  
 And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice  
 Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice,  
 Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar,  
 While through the thronged streets your bridal car  
 Wheels round its dashing spokes?—The lady's cheek  
 Trembled: she nothing said, but, pale and weak,  
 Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain  
 Of sorrows at his words: at last with part  
 Beseeching him, the while his hand she vainly  
 To change his purpose. He there stood stern,  
 Perverse, with stronger fancy to retain  
 Her wild and timid nature to his own  
 Pleading for all his love, in sooth despair.  
 Against his better self, he took delight

# ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

rious in her sorrows, soft and new.  
 passion, cruel grown, took on a hue  
 rce and sanguineous as 't was possible  
 one whose brow had no dark veins to swell,  
 ne was the mitigated fury, like  
 pollo's presence when in act to strike  
 'he serpent—Ha, the serpent! certes, she  
 Vas none. She burnt, she loved the tyranny,  
 And, all subdued, consented to the hour  
 When to the bridal he should lead his paramour.  
 Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth,  
 "Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by my truth,  
 I have not ask'd it, ever thinking thee  
 Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,  
 As still I do. Hast any mortal name,  
 Fit appellation for this dazzling frame?  
 Or friends or kinsfolk on the cited earth,  
 To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth?"  
 "I have no friends," said Lamia, "no, not one;  
 My presence in wide Corinth hardly known.  
 My parents' bones are in their dusty urns  
 Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns,  
 Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,  
 And I neglect the holy rite for thee.  
 Even as you list invite your many guests:  
 But if, as now it seems, your vision rests  
 With any pleasure on me, do not bid  
 Old Apollonius—from him keep me hid."  
 Lycius, perplex'd at words so blind and blank,  
 Made close inquiry; from whose touch she shrank,  
 Feigning a sleep; and he to the dull shade  
 Of deep sleep in a moment was betray'd.

It was the custom then to bring away  
 The bride from home at blushing shut of day,

Field, in a chariot, heralded along  
 By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage song,  
 With other pageants; but this fair and young  
 Had not a friend. So lonely left alone  
 (Lycius was gone to summon all his kin),  
 And knowing surely she could never win  
 His foolish heart from its mad pompanousness,  
 She set herself, high-thoughted, how to die  
 The misery in fit magnificence.  
 She did so, but 'tis doubtful how and whence  
 Came, and who were, her subtle servitors,  
 About the halls, and to and from the doors,  
 There was a noise of wings, till in short space  
 The glowing banquet-room shone with wide arched space  
 A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone  
 Supportress of the fairy roof, made mean  
 Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade.  
 Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade  
 Of palm and plantain, met from either side,  
 High in the midst, in honour of the bride:  
 Two palms and then two plantains, and so on,  
 From either side their stems branched one to one  
 All down the aisled place, and beneath all  
 There ran a stream of lamps straight on from wall to wall  
 So canopied, lay an untasted feast  
 Teeming with odours. Languid, reared the host,  
 Silently paced about, and as she went,  
 In pite contented sort of discontent,  
 Misshod but viewless servants to enrich  
 The fretted splendour of each nook and niche  
 Between the tree stems marbled plain at first,  
 Came jasper panels; then, among the best of  
 Both creeping hierarchy of "elder trees,"  
 And with the lesser ones, in small intricate  
 Approaching all, she ended at a door.



## JOHN KEATS

A corn of food with myrrh and spiced wine,  
Laid by a red tripod held aloft,  
With a slender foot wide-swerred up to the sky,  
We drew our carpets: fifty wreaths of smokes  
From fifty censers their light voyage took  
To the high roof, still mimick'd as they rose  
Along the mirror'd walls by twin-clouds;  
Twelve spindled tables by silk seats in rows  
High as the level of a man's breast reared  
On libbard's paws, upheld the heavy gear  
Of cups and goblets, and the store of wine  
Of Ceres' horn, and, in huge vessels, were  
Come from the gloomy tun with rattle and din,  
Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood  
Each shrouding in the midst the image of a god.

When in an antechamber every guest  
Had felt the cold full sponge to refresh his head,  
By ministering slaves, upon his hair was laid  
And fragrant oils with ceremony meet  
Pour'd on his hair, they all moved to the hall  
In white robes, and themselves in white array  
Around the silken couches, where they lay  
Whence all this mighty cost and labour came  
spring.

Soft went the music the soft air long  
While fluent Greek a varied undertone  
Kept up among the guests, & every eye  
At first, for scarcely was the wine in  
But when the happy wine was down  
I wonder they took such a long time  
Of peaceful rest, & the guests were  
The guests were all the while  
The guests were all the while  
The guests were all the while

# ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

, when the wine has done its rosy deed,  
 i every soul from human trammels freed,  
 more so strange; for merry wine, sweet wine,  
 ll make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine.  
 on was God Bacchus at meridian height;  
 lush'd were their cheeks, and bright eyes double bright  
 Jarlands of every green, and every scent  
 From vales deflower'd, or forest-trees branch-rent,  
 In baskets of bright osier'd gold were brought  
 High as the handles heap'd, to suit the thought  
 Of every guest; that each, as he did please,  
 Mighth fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillow'd at his ease.

What wreath for Lamia? What for Lycius?  
 What for the sage, old Apollonius?  
 Upon her aching forehead be there hung  
 The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue;  
 And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him  
 The thyrsus, that his watching eyes may swim  
 Into forgetfulness; and, for the sage,  
 Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage  
 War on his temples. Do not all charms fly  
 At the mere touch of cold philosophy?  
 There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:  
 We know her woof, her texture; she is given  
 In the dull catalogue of common things.  
 Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,  
 Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,  
 Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine—  
 Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made  
 The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade.

By her glad Lycius sitting, in chief place,  
 Scarce saw in all the room another face,  
 Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took  
 " brimm'd, and opposite sent forth a look

Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance  
 From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance,  
 And pledge him. The bald-head philosopher  
 Had fix'd his eye, without a twinkle or a stir,  
 Full on the alarmed beauty of the bride,  
 Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her sweet pride.  
 Lycius then press'd her hand, with devout touch,  
 As pale it lay upon the rosy couch:  
 'T was icy, and the cold ran through his veins;  
 Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains  
 Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart.

"Lamia, what means this? Wherefore dost thou start?  
 Know'st thou that man?" Poor Lamia answer'd not.

He gazed into her eyes, and not a jot  
 Own'd they the lovelorn piteous appeal:  
 More, more he gazed: his human senses reel:  
 Some hungry spell that loveliness absorbs;  
 There was no recognition in those orbs.

"Lamia!" he cried—and no soft-toned reply.  
 The many heard, and the loud revelry  
 Grew hush: the stately music no more breathes:  
 The myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths.  
 By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased;  
 A deadly silence step by step increased,  
 Until it seem'd a horrid presence there,  
 And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.

"Lamia!" he shriek'd; and nothing but the shriek  
 With its sad echo did the silence break.

"Be gone, foul dream!" he cried, gazing again  
 In the bride's face, where now no azure vein  
 Wander'd on fair-spaced temples: no soft bloom  
 Mist'd the cheek: no passion to illum-

The deep-ey'd vision:—all was blight;  
 Lamia no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.

"Shut, shut that juggling eye, thou ruthless man!"



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Motted the cheek: no passion to illumine  
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"Shut, shut those juggling eyes, thou ruthless woman!"



## XV. ISABELLA, OR THE POT OF BASIL

A Story, from *Biancetto*

## I

[FAIR Isabel, poor simple Isabel!

Lorenzo, a young palmer in Love's eye!  
They could not in the self-same mansion dwell  
Without some stir of heart, some malady;  
They could not sit at meals but feel how well  
It soothed each to be the other by;  
They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep,  
But to each other dream, and nightly weep.

## II

With every morn their love grew tenderer,  
With every eve deeper and tenderer still;  
He might not in house, field, or garden stir,  
But her full shape would all his seeing fill;  
And his continual voice was pleasanter  
To her, than noise of trees or hidden rill;  
Her late string gave an echo of his name,  
He spelt her half-done broidery with the same.

## III

He knew whose gentle hand was at the latch,  
Before the door had given her to his eyes;  
And from her chamber-window he would catch  
Her beauty farther than the falcon spies,  
And constant as her vespers would he watch,  
Because her face was turn'd to the same skies;  
And with sick longing all the night outwear,  
Till at her morning step up on the stair.

IV

whole long month of May in this sad plight  
 Made their cheeks paler by the break of June:  
 "To-morrow will I bow to my delight,  
 To-morrow will I ask my lady's boon."—  
 "O may I never see another night,  
 Lorenzo, if thy lips breathe not love's tune."—  
 So spake they to their pillows; but, alas!  
 Honeyless days and days did he let pass;

V

Until sweet Isabella's untouch'd cheek  
 Fell sick within the rose's just domain,  
 Fell thin as a young mother's, who doth seek  
 By every lull to cool her infant's pain:  
 "How ill she is!" said he, "I may not speak,  
 And yet I will, and tell my love all plain:  
 If looks speak love-laws, I will drink her tears,  
 And at the least 't will startle off her cares."

VI

So said he one fair morning, and all day  
 His heart beat awfully against his side;  
 And to his heart he inwardly did pray  
 For power to speak; but still the ruddy tide  
 Stifled his voice, and pulsed resolve away—  
 Fever'd his high conceit of such a bride,  
 Yet brought him to the meekness of a child:  
 Alas! when passion is both meek and wild!

VII

So once more he had waked and anguished  
 A dreary night of love and misery,  
 If Isabel's quick eye had not been wed  
 To every symbol on his forehead high;

he saw it waxing very pale and dazed,  
 And straight all fearful, he leaped tenderly,  
 "Lorenzo!" here she ceased her timid speech,  
 but in her tone and look he read the rest.

## VIII

"O Isabella! I can half perceive  
 That I may speak my grief into thine ear;  
 If thou didst ever anything believe,  
 Believe how I love thee, believe how near  
 My soul is to its doom: I would not prove  
 Thy hand by unwelcome pressing, wouldst thou fear  
 Thine eyes by gazing; but I cannot live  
 Another night, and not my passion thrive."

## IX

"Love! thou art leading me from wintry cold,  
 Lady! thou ledest me to summer clime,  
 And I must taste the blossoms that unfold  
 In its ripe warmth this gracious morning morn;  
 So said, his erewhile timid lips grew bold,  
 And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme:  
 Great bliss was with them, and great happiness  
 Grew, like a lusty flower in June's caress."

## X

Parting they seem'd to tread upon the air,  
 Twin roses by the zephyr blown apart  
 Only to meet again more close, and share  
 The inward fragrance of other's heart.  
 She to her chamber gone, a ditty fair  
 Sang, of delicious love and honey  
 With light steps went up a wicket



That he, the servant of their trade designs,  
 Should in their sister's love be blithe and glad,  
 When 't was their plan to coax her by degrees  
 To come high noble and his olive-trees.

## XXII

And many a jealous conference had they,  
 And many times they bit their lips alone,  
 Before they fix'd upon a surest way  
 To make the youngster for his crime atone;  
 And at the last, these men of cruel clay  
 Cut Mercy with a sharp knife to the bone;  
 For they resolved in some forest dim  
 To kill Lorenzo, and there bury him.

## XXIII

So on a pleasant morning, as he leant  
 Into the sun-rise, o'er the balustrade  
 Of the garden-terrace, towards him they bent  
 Their footing through the dews; and to him said,  
 "You seem there in the quiet of content,  
 Lorenzo, and we are most loth to invade  
 Calm speculation: but if you are wise,  
 Bestride your steed while cold is in the skies.

## XXIV

"To-day we purpose, ay, this hour we mount  
 To spur three leagues towards the Apennine;  
 Come down, we pray thee, ere the hot sun count  
 His dewy rosary on the eglantine."  
 Lorenzo, courteously as he was wont,  
 Bow'd a fair greeting to these serpents' whine;  
 And went in haste, to get in readiness,  
 With bridle, and spur, and bracing huntsman's clasp



XXV

d as he to the court-yard pass'd along,  
 Each third step did he pause, and listen'd oft  
 he could hear his lady's matin-song,  
 Or the light whisper of her footstep soft;  
 And as he thus over his passion hung,  
 He heard a laugh full musical aloft;  
 When, looking up, he saw her features bright  
 Smile through an in-door lattice all delight.

XXVI

"Love, Isabel!" said he, "I was in pain  
 Lest I should miss to bid thee a good morrow:  
 Ah! what if I should lose thee, when so fain  
 I am to stifle all the heavy sorrow  
 Of a poor three hours' absence? but we'll gain  
 Out of the amorous dark what day doth borrow.  
 Good-bye! I'll soon be back."—"Good-bye!" said she:  
 And as he went she chanted merrily.

XXVII

So the two brothers and their murder'd man  
 Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno's stream  
 Gurgles through straiten'd banks, and still doth fan  
 Itself with dancing bulrush, and the bream  
 Keeps head against the freshets. Sick and wan  
 The brothers' faces in the ford did seem,  
 Lorenzo's flush with love. They pass'd the water  
 Into a forest quiet for the slaughter.

XXVIII

There was Lorenzo slain and buried in,  
 There in that forest did his great love cease;  
 Ah! when a soul doth thus its freedom win,  
 It aches in loneliness—is ill at peace





As the breakers o'er the blood-stained sands of such a day  
 They dipped their swords in the water, and did tea  
 Their horses homeward, with convulsed quiver,  
 Each richer by his being a murderer.

## XXIX

They told their sister how, with sudden speed,  
 Lorenzo had taken ship for foreign lands,  
 Because of some great urgency and need  
 In their affairs, requiring trusty hands.  
 Poor girl! put on thy stilling widow's woe,  
 And leave at once from Hope's recurrent lands;  
 To-day thou wilt not see him, nor to-morrow,  
 And the next day will be a day of sorrow.

## XXX

She weeps alone for pleasures not to be;  
 So sorely she wept until the night came on,  
 And then, instead of love, O misery!  
 She brooded o'er the luxury alone  
 His image in the dusk she seemed to see,  
 And to the silence made a gentle moan,  
 Spreading her perfect arms upon the air,  
 And on her couch low murmuring, "Where? O where?"

## XXXI

But Self-denial, Love's canker, held not long  
 Its fiery vigil in her single breast;  
 She fretted for the golden hour, and long  
 Upon the time with feverish unrest  
 Not long for coming, but that least a while  
 Of higher occupation, rich and free,  
 O'er the waste of passion not to be withheld.

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## XXXI

But Selfishness, Love's cousin, held not long

It very vital in her single breast;

She melted for the golden hour, and hung

Upon the time with feverish unrest

Not long; for soon into her heart a throng

Of higher thoughts came, a richer rest,

Of higher thoughts, and not to be subdued,

To let the fever of her love in travel rife.

## XXXII

The mid days of autumn, on their eves  
 The breath of Winter comes from far away,  
 And the sick west continually bereaves  
 Of some gold tinge, and plays a roundelay  
 Of death among the bushes and the leaves,  
 To make all bare before he dares to stray  
 From his north cavern. So sweet Isabel  
 By gradual decay from beauty fell,

## XXXIII

Because Lorenzo came not. Oftentimes  
 She ask'd her brothers, with an eye all pale,  
 Striving to be itself, what dungeon climes  
 Could keep him off so long? They spake a tale  
 Time after time, to quiet her. Their crimes  
 Came on them, like a smoke from Hinnom's vale;  
 And every night in dreams they groan'd aloud,  
 To see their sister in her snowy shroud.

## XXXIV

And she had died in drowsy ignorance,  
 But for a thing more deadly dark than all;  
 It came like a fierce potion, drunk by chance,  
 Which saves a sick man from the feather'd pall  
 For some few gasping moments; like a lance,  
 Waking an Indian from his cloudy hall  
 With cruel pierce, and bringing him again  
 Sense of the gnawing fire at heart and brain.

## XXXV

It was a vision. In the drowsy gloom,  
 The dull of midnight, at her couch's foot  
 Lorenzo stood, and wept: the forest tomb  
 Had marr'd his glossy hair which once could s

Lure into the sun, and put cold doom  
 Upon his lips, and taken the soft lute  
 From his lorn voice, and past his loamed ears  
 Had made a miry channel for his tears.

## XXXVI

Strange sound it was, when the pale shadow spake,  
 For there was striving, in its piteous tongue,  
 To speak as when on earth it was awake,  
 And *Isabella* on its music hung:  
 Languor there was in it, and tremulous shake,  
 As in a paled *Druid's* harp unstrung;  
 And through it mean'd a ghostly under-song,  
 Like hoarse night gusts sepulchral briars among.

## XXXVII

Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy bright  
 With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof  
 From the poor girl by magic of their light,  
 And while it did unthread the horrid woof  
 Of the late darken'd time—the murderous spite  
 Of pride and avarice—the dark pine roof  
 In the forest—and the sodden turfed dell,  
 Where, without any words, from stabs he fell.

## XXXVIII

Saying moreover, "*Isabel*, my sweet!  
 Re I whistle berries drop above my head,  
 And a large flint stem weigh upon my feet,  
 Around me beeches—and high chestnuts shed  
 Their leave—and prickly nuts; a sheep-fold bleat  
 Comes from beyond the river to my bed;  
 Or, shed one tear upon my heather-bloom,  
 And I shall comfort me within the tomb.



XXXIX

I am a shadow now, alas! alas!  
 Upon the skirts of human nature dwelling  
 One: I chant alone the holy mass,  
 While little sounds of life are round me knelling,  
 And glossy bees at noon do fieldward pass,  
 And many a chapel bell the hour is telling,  
 Paining me through: those sounds grow strange to me  
 And thou art distant in Humanity.

XL

"I know what was, I feel full well what is,  
 And I should rage, if spirits could go mad;  
 Though I forget the taste of earthly bliss,  
 That paleness warms my grave, as though I had  
 A seraph chosen from the bright abyss  
 To be my spouse: thy paleness makes me glad:  
 Thy beauty grows upon me, and I feel  
 A greater love through all my essence steal."

XLI

The Spirit mourn'd "Adieu!"—dissolved, and left  
 The atom darkness in a slow turmoil;  
 As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,  
 Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil,  
 We put our eyes into a pillow cleft,  
 And see the spangly gloom froth up and boil:  
 It made sad Isabella's eyelids ache,  
 And in the dawn she started up awake;

XLII

"Ha! ha!" said she, "I knew not this hard life,  
 I thought the worst was simple misery;  
 I thought some Fate with pleasure or with strife  
 Portion'd us—happy days, or else to die;

But there is crime—a brother's bloody knife!  
 Sweet Spirit, thou hast school'd my infancy :  
 I'll visit thee for this, and kiss thine eyes,  
 And greet thee morn and even in the skies!"

## XLIII

When the full morning came, she had devised  
 How she might secret to the forest hie;  
 How she might find the clay, so dearly prized,  
 And sing to it one latest lullaby;  
 How her short absence might be unsurmised,  
 While she the inmost of the dream would try.  
 Resolved, she took with her an aged nurse,  
 And went into that dismal forest-hearse.

## XLIV

See, as they creep along the river side,  
 How she doth whisper to that aged dame,  
 And, after looking round the champaign wide,  
 Shows her a knife.—"What feverous hectic flame  
 Burns in thee, child?—what good can thee be told  
 That thou shouldst smile again?"—The evening came,  
 And they had found Lorenzo's earthy bed;  
 The flint was there, the berries at his head.

## XLV

Who hath not loiter'd in a green churchyard,  
 And let his spirit, like a demon mole,  
 Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard  
 To see skull, coffin'd bones, and funeral shroud;  
 Plying each form that hungry Death hath torn,  
 And filling it once more with human form?  
 All this is holiday to what was felt  
 When Isabella by Lorenzo knelt.



Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance,  
For here, in truth, it doth not well belong  
To speak:—O turn thee to the very tale,  
And taste the music of that vision pale.

## L

With duller steel than the Perséan sword  
They cut away no formless monster's head,  
But one, whose gentleness did well accord  
With death, as life. The ancient harps have said,  
Love never dies, but lives, immortal Lord:  
If Love impersonate was ever dead,  
Pale Isabella kiss'd it, and low moan'd.  
'T was love; cold,—dead indeed, but not dethroned.

## LI

In anxious secrecy they took it home,  
And then the prize was all for Isabel:  
She calm'd its wild hair with a golden comb,  
And all around each eye's sepulchral cell  
Pointed each fringed lash; the smeared loam  
With tears, as chilly as a dripping well,  
She drench'd away: and still she comb'd and kept  
Sighing all day—and still she kiss'd and wept.

## LII

Then in a silken scarf,—sweet with the dews  
Of precious flowers pluck'd in Araby,  
And divine liquids come with odorous ooze  
Through the cold serpent-pipe refreshfully,—  
She wrapp'd it up; and for its tomb did choose  
A garden-pot, wherein she laid it by,  
And cover'd it with mould, and o'er it set  
Sweet Basil, which her tears kept ever wet.

## XLVI

She gazed into the fresh-thrown mould, as though  
One glance did fully all its secrets tell ;  
Clearly she saw, as other eyes would know  
Pale limbs at bottom of a crystal well ;  
Upon the murderous spot she seem'd to grow,  
Like to a native lily of the dell :  
Then with her knife, all sudden she began  
To dig more fervently than misers can.

## XLVII

Soon she turn'd up a soiled glove, whereon  
Her silk had play'd in purple phantasies ;  
She kiss'd it with a lip more chill than stone,  
And put it in her bosom, where it dries  
And freezes utterly unto the bone  
Those dainties made to still an infant's cries :  
Then 'gan she work again ; nor stay'd her care,  
But to throw back at times her veiling hair.

## XLVIII

That old nurse stood beside her wondering,  
Until her heart felt pity to the core  
At sight of such a dismal labouring,  
And so she kneeled, with her locks all hoar,  
And put her lean hands to the horrid thing :  
Three hours they labour'd at this travail sore ;  
At last they felt the kernel of the grave,  
And Isabella did not stamp and rave.

## XLIX

Ah ! wherefore all this wormy circumstance ?  
Why linger at the yawning tomb so long ?  
O for the gentleness of old Romance,  
The simple plaining of a minstrel's song !

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Love never dies, but lives, immortal Lord:  
If Love impersonate was ever dead,  
Pale Isabella kiss'd it, and low moan'd.  
'T was love; cold,—dead indeed, but not dethroned.

## LI

In anxious secrecy they took it home,  
And then the prize was all for Isabel:  
She calm'd its wild hair with a golden comb,  
And all around each eye's sepulchral cell  
Pointed each fringed lash; the smeared loam  
With tears, as chilly as a dripping well,  
She drench'd away: and still she comb'd and kept  
Sighing all day—and still she kiss'd and wept.

## LII

Then in a silken scarf,—sweet with the dews  
Of precious flowers pluck'd in Araby,  
And divine liquids come with odorous ooze  
Through the cold serpent-pipe refreshfully,—  
She wrapp'd it up; and for its tomb did choose  
A garden-pot, wherein she laid it by,  
And cover'd it with mould, and o'er it set  
Sweet Basil, which her tears kept ever wet.



Sound mournfully upon the winds and low;  
 For simple Isabel is soon to be  
 Among the dead : She withers, like a palm  
 Cut by an Indian for its juicy balm.

## LVII

O leave the palm to wither by itself;  
 Let not quick Winter chill its dying hour!—  
 It may not be—those Baâlites of pelf,  
 Her brethren, noted the continual shower  
 From her dead eyes; and many a curious elf, *relative to*  
 Among her kindred, wonder'd that such dower  
 Of youth and beauty should be thrown aside  
 By one mark'd out to be a Noble's bride.

## LVIII

And, furthermore, her brethren wonder'd much  
 Why she sat drooping by the Basil green,  
 And why it flourish'd, as by magic touch;  
 Greatly they wonder'd what the thing might mean:  
 They could not surely give belief, that such  
 A very nothing would have power to wean  
 Her from her own fair youth, and pleasures gay,  
 And even remembrance of her love's delay.

## LIX

Therefore they watch'd a time when they might sift  
 This hidden whim; and long they watch'd in vain;  
 For seldom did she go to chapel-shrift,  
 And seldom felt she any hunger-pain:  
 And when she left, she hurried back, as swift  
 As bird on wing to breast its eggs again:  
 And, patient as a hen-bird, sat her there  
 Beside her Basil, weeping through her hair.





Grey-eyed and crisp-haired, beautiful of limb,  
And no ill eye the women cast on him.

But kneeling now, and stretching forth his hand,  
He said, "O thou, the king of this fair land,  
Unto a banished man some shelter give,  
And help me with thy goods that I may live:  
'Thou hast good store, Admetus, yet may I,  
Who kneel before thee now in misery,  
Give thee more gifts before the end shall come  
Than all thou hast laid safely in thine home".

"Rise up, and be my guest," Admetus said,  
"I need no gifts for this poor gift of bread,  
The land is wide, and bountiful enow.  
What thou canst do, to-morrow thou shalt show,  
And be my man, perchance; but this night rest  
Not questioned more than any passing guest.  
Yea, even if a great king thou hast spilt,  
'Thou shalt not answer aught but as thou wilt."

Then the man rose and said, "O king, indeed  
Of thine awarded silence have I need,  
Nameless I am, nameless what I have done  
Must be through many circles of the sun.  
But for to-morrow—let me rather tell  
On this same eve what things I can do well,  
And let me put mine hand in thine and swear  
To serve thee faithfully a changing year;  
Nor think the woods of Ossa hold one beast  
That of thy tenderest yearling shall make feast,  
Whiles that I guard thy flocks; and thou shalt bear  
Thy troubles easier when thou com'st to hear  
The music I can make. Let these thy men  
Witness against me if I fail thee, when  
War falls upon thy lovely land and thee."

Then the king smiled, and said, "So let it be,  
Well shalt thou serve me, doing far less than this,  
Nor for thy service due gifts shalt thou miss:  
Behold I take thy faith with thy right hand,  
Be thou true man unto this guarded land.  
Ho ye! take this my guest, find raiment meet  
Wherewith to clothe him; bathe his wearied feet,  
And bring him back beside my throne to feast."

But to himself he said, "I am the least  
Of all Thessalians if this man was born  
In any earthly dwelling more forlorn  
Than a king's palace".

Then a damsel slim  
Led him inside, nought loth to go with him,  
And when the cloud of steam had curled to meet  
Within the brass his wearied dusty feet,  
She from a carved press brought him linen fair  
And a new-woven coat a king might wear,  
And so being clad he came unto the feast,  
But as he came again, all people ceased  
What talk they held soever, for they thought  
A very god among them had been brought;  
And doubly glad the king Admetus was  
At what that dying eve had brought to pass,  
And bade him sit by him and feast his fill.

So there they sat till all the world was still,  
And 'twixt the pillars their red torches' shine  
Held forth unto the night a joyous sign.

So henceforth did this man at Pheræ dwell,  
And what he set his hand to wrought right well  
And won much praise and love in everything,  
And came to rule all herdsmen of the king;

But for two things in chief his fame did grow;  
And first that he was better with the bow  
Than any 'twixt Olympus and the sea;  
And then that sweet, heart-piercing melody  
He drew out from the rigid-seeming lyre,  
And made the circle round the winter fire  
More like to heaven than gardens of the May.  
So many a heavy thought he chased away  
From the king's heart, and softened many a hate,  
And choked the spring of many a harsh debate;  
And, taught by wounds, the snatchers of the wolds  
Lurked round the gates of less well-guarded folds.  
Therefore Admetus loved him, yet withal,  
Strange doubts and fears upon his heart did fall;  
For morns there were when he the man would meet,  
His hair wreathed round with bay and blossoms sweet,  
Gazing distraught into the brightening east,  
Nor taking heed of either man or beast,  
Or anything that was upon the earth,  
Or sometimes, midst the hottest of the mirth,  
Within the king's hall, would he seem to wake  
As from a dream, and his stringed tortoise take  
And strike the cords unbidden, till the hall,  
Filled with the glorious sound from wall to wall,  
Trembled and seemed as it would melt away,  
And sunken down the faces weeping lay  
That erewhile laughed the loudest; only he  
Stood upright, looking forward steadily  
With sparkling eyes as one who cannot weep,  
Until the storm of music sank to sleep.

But this thing seemed the doubtfullest of all  
Unto the king, that should there chance to fall  
A festal day, and folk did sacrifice  
Unto the gods, ever by some device



Howe'er it was, he gat him through the town  
And midst their shouts at last he lighted down  
At his own house, and held high feast that night;  
And yet by seeming had but small delight  
In aught that any man could do or say:  
And on the morrow, just at dawn of day,  
Rose up and clad himself, and took his spear,  
And in the fresh and blossom-scented air  
Went wandering till he reached Bœbeis' shore;  
Yet by his troubled face set little store  
By all the songs of birds and scent of flowers;  
Yea, rather unto him the fragrant hours  
Were grown but dull and empty of delight.

So going, at the last he came in sight  
Of his new herdsman, who that morning lay  
Close by the white sand of a little bay  
The teeming ripple of Bœbeis lapped;  
There he in cloak of white-woolled sheepskin wrapped  
Against the cold dew, free from trouble sang,  
The while the heifers' bells about him rang  
And mingled with the sweet soft-throated birds  
And bright fresh ripple: listen, then, these words  
Will tell the tale of his felicity,  
Halting and void of music though they be.

*Song.*

O dwellers on the lovely earth,  
Why will ye break your rest and mirth  
To weary us with fruitless prayer;  
Why will ye toil and take such care  
For children's children yet unborn,  
And garner store of strife and scorn  
To gain a scarce-remembered name,  
Cumbered with lies and soiled with shame?



What wilt thou have? What help there is in me  
Is wholly thine, for in felicity  
Within thine house thou still hast let me live,  
Nor grudged most noble gifts to me to give."

"Yea", said Admetus, "thou canst help indeed,  
But as the spring shower helps the unsown mead.  
Yet listen: at Iolchos the first day  
Unto Diana's house I took my way,  
Where all men gathered ere the games began,  
There, at the right side of the royal man,  
Who rules Iolchos, did his daughter stand,  
Who with a suppliant bough in her right hand  
Headed the band of maidens; but to me  
More than a goddess did she seem to be,  
Nor fit to die; and therewithal I thought  
That we had all been thither called for nought  
But that her bridegroom Pelias might choose,  
And with that thought desire did I let loose,  
And striving not with Love, I gazed my fill,  
As one who will not fear the coming ill:  
Ah, foolish were mine eyes, foolish my heart,  
To strive in such a marvel to have part!  
What god shall wed her rather? no more fear  
Than vexes Pallas vexed her forehead clear,  
Faith shone from out her eyes, and on her lips  
Unknown love trembled; the Phœnician ships  
Within their dark holds nought so precious bring  
As her soft golden hair; no daintiest thing  
I ever saw was half so wisely wrought  
As was her rosy ear; beyond all thought,  
All words to tell of, her veiled body showed,  
As, by the image of the Three-formed bowed,  
She laid her offering down; then I drawn near  
The murmuring of her gentle voice could hear,





Is to be tossed about from wave to wave,  
All these at last to me the honour gave,  
Nor did they grudge it: yea, and one man said,  
A wise Thessalian with a snowy head,  
And voice grown thin with age, 'O Pelias,  
Surely to thee no evil thing it was  
That to thy house this rich Thessalian  
Should come, to prove himself a valiant man  
Amongst these heroes; for if I be wise  
By dint of many years, with wistful eyes  
Doth he behold thy daughter, this fair maid;  
And surely, if the matter were well weighed,  
Good were it both for thee and for the land  
That he should take the damsel by the hand  
And lead her hence, for ye near neighbours dwell;  
What sayest thou, king, have I said ill or well?'

"With that must I, a fool, stand forth and ask  
If yet there lay before me some great task  
That I must do ere I the maid should wed;  
But Pelias, looking on us, smiled and said,  
'O neighbour of Larissa, and thou too,  
O King Admetus, this may seem to you  
A little matter; yea, and for my part  
E'en such a marriage would make glad my heart;  
But we the blood of Salmoneus who share  
With godlike gifts great burdens also bear,  
Nor is this maid without them, for the day  
On which her maiden zone she puts away  
Shall be her death-day, if she wed with one  
By whom this marvellous thing may not be done.  
For in the traces neither must steeds paw  
Before my threshold, or white oxen draw  
The wain that comes my maid to take from me,  
Far other beasts that day her slaves must be:



For certainly no help is left to me,  
But I must get me down unto the sea  
And build a keel, and whatso things I may  
Set in her hold, and cross the watery way  
Whither Jove bids, and the rough winds may blow  
Unto a land where none my folly know,  
And there begin a weary life anew."

Eager and bright the herdsman's visage grew  
The while this tale was told, and at the end  
He said, "Admetus, I thy life may mend,  
And thou at lovely Pheræ still may dwell;  
Wait for ten days, and then may all be well,  
And thou to fetch thy maiden home may go  
And to the king thy team unheard-of show.  
And if not, then make ready for the sea,  
Nor will I fail indeed to go with thee,  
And 'twixt the halyards and the ashen oar  
Finish the service well begun ashore;  
But meanwhile do I bid thee hope the best;  
And take another herdsman for the rest,  
For unto Ossa must I go alone  
To do a deed not easy to be done."

Then springing up he took his spear and bow  
And northward by the lake-shore 'gan to go;  
But the king gazed upon him as he went,  
Then, sighing, turned about, and homeward bent  
His lingering steps, and hope began to spring  
Within his heart, for some betokening  
He seemed about the herdsman now to see  
Of one from mortal cares and troubles free.

And so midst hopes and fears day followed day,  
Until at last upon his bed he lay  
When the grey, creeping dawn had now begun  
To make the wide world ready for the sun







Let me behold the prize that I have won,  
Mine eyes are wearying now to look upon."

"Fear not," he said, "the Fates are satisfied;  
Yet wilt thou not descend and here abide,  
Doing me honour till the next bright morn  
Has dried the dew upon the new-sprung corn,  
That we in turn may give the honour due  
To such a man that such a thing can do,  
And unto all the gods may sacrifice?"

"Nay," said Admetus, "if thou call'st me wise,  
And like a very god thou dost me deem,  
Shall I abide the ending of the dream  
And so gain nothing? nay, let me be glad  
That I at least one godlike hour have had  
At whatsoever time I come to die,  
That I may mock the world that passes by,  
And yet forget it." Saying this, indeed,  
Of Pelias did he seem to take small heed,  
But spoke as one unto himself may speak,  
And still the half-shut door his eyes did seek,  
Wherethrough from distant rooms sweet music came,  
Setting his over-strained heart a-flame,  
Because amidst the Lydian flutes he thought  
From place to place his love the maidens brought.

Then Pelias said, "What can I give to thee  
Who fail'st so little of divinity?  
Yet let my slaves lay these poor gifts within  
Thy chariot, while my daughter strives to win  
The favour of the spirits of this place,  
Since from their altars she must turn her face  
For ever now; hearken, her flutes I hear,  
From the last chapel doth she draw anear."





Then with that word Alcestis silently,  
And with no look cast back, and ring in hand,  
Went forth, and soon beside her love did stand,  
Nor on his finger failed to set the ring;  
And then a golden cup the city's king  
Gave to him, and he poured and said, "O thou,  
From whatsoever place thou lookest now,  
What prayers, what gifts unto thee shall I give  
That we a little time with love may live?  
A little time of love, then fall asleep  
Together, while the crown of love we keep."

So spake he, and his strange beasts turned about,  
And heeded not the people's wavering shout  
That from their old fear and new pleasure sprung,  
Nor noted aught of what the damsels sung,  
Or of the flowers that after them they cast,  
But like a dream the guarded city passed,  
And 'twixt the song of birds and blossoms' scent  
It seemed for many hundred years they went,  
Though short the way was unto Pheræ's gates.  
Time they forgot, and gods, and men, and fates,  
However nigh unto their hearts they were.  
The woodland boars, the yellow lords of fear,  
No more seemed strange to them, but all the earth  
With all its changing sorrow and wild mirth  
In that fair hour seemed new-born to the twain,  
Grief seemed a play forgot, a pageant vain,  
A picture painted, who knows where or when,  
With soulless images of restless men;  
For every thought but love was now gone by,  
And they forgot that they should ever die.

But when they came anigh the sacred wood,  
There, bidding them, Admetus' herdsman stood,

At sight of whom those yoke-fellows unchecked  
Stopped dead, and little of Admetus recked,  
Who now, as one from dreams not yet awake,  
Drew back his love and did his wain forsake,  
And gave the carven rod and guiding bands  
Into the waiting herdsman's outstretched hands.  
But when he would have thanked him for the thing  
That he had done, his speechless tongue must cling  
Unto his mouth, and why he could not tell.  
But the man said, "No words! thou hast done well  
To me, as I to thee; the day may come  
When thou shalt ask me for a fitting home,  
Nor shalt thou ask in vain; but hasten now,  
And to thine house this royal maiden show,  
Then give her to thy women for this night.  
But when thou wakest up to thy delight  
To-morrow, do all things that should be done,  
Nor of the gods, forget thou any one,  
And on the next day will I come again  
To tend thy flocks upon the grassy plain.

"But now depart, and from thine home send here  
Chariot and horse, these gifts of thine to bear  
Unto thine house, and going, look not back  
Lest many a wished-for thing thou com'st to lack."

Then hand in hand together, up the road  
The lovers passed unto the king's abode,  
And as they went, the whining snort and roar  
From the yoked beasts they heard break out once more  
And then die off, as they were led away;  
But whether to some place lit up by day,  
Or, 'neath the earth, they knew not; for the twain  
Went hastening on, nor once looked back again.

But soon the minstrels met them, and a band  
Of white-robed damsels flowery boughs in hand.

To bid them welcome to that pleasant place.  
 Then they, rejoicing much, in no long space  
 Came to the brazen-pillared porch, whereon  
 From 'twixt the passes of the hills yet shone  
 The dying sun; and there she stood awhile  
 Without the threshold, a faint tender smile  
 Trembling upon her lips 'twixt love and shame,  
 Until each side of her a maiden came  
 And raised her in their arms, that her fair feet  
 The polished brazen threshold might not meet,  
 And in Admetus' house she stood at last.

But to the women's chamber straight she passed  
 Bepraised of all,—and so the wakeful night  
 Lonely the lovers passed e'en as they might.

But the next day with many a sacrifice,  
 Admetus wrought, for such a well-won prize,  
 A life so blest, the gods to satisfy,  
 And many a matchless beast that day did die  
 Upon the altars; nought unlucky seemed  
 To be amid the joyous crowd that gleamed  
 With gold and precious things, and only this  
 Seemed wanting to the King of Pheræ's bliss,  
 And all these pageants should be soon past by,  
 And hid by night the fair spring blossoms lie.

Yet on the morrow-morn Admetus came,  
 A haggard man oppressed with grief and shame  
 Unto the spot beside Boëbeis' shore  
 Whereby he met his herdsman once before,  
 And there again he found him flushed and glad  
 And from the babbling water newly clad.  
 Then he with downcast eyes these words began,

"O thou, whatso thy name is, god or man,  
 Harken to me: meseemeth of thy deed  
 Some dread immortal taketh angry heed.

“Last night the height of my desire seemed won,  
All day my weary eyes had watched the sun  
Rise up and sink, and now was come the night  
When I should be alone with my delight;  
Silent the house was now from floor to roof,  
And in the well-hung chambers, far aloof,  
The feasters lay; the moon was in the sky;  
The soft spring wind was wafting lovingly  
Across the gardens fresh scents to my sweet,  
As, troubled with the sound of my own feet,  
I passed betwixt the pillars, whose long shade  
Black on the white red-veined floor was laid:  
So happy was I that the briar-rose,  
Rustling outside within the flowery close,  
Seemed but Love’s odorous wing—too real all seemed  
For such a joy as I had never dreamed.

“Why do I linger, as I lingered not  
In that fair house, now ne’er to be forgot  
While my life lasts?—Upon the gilded door  
I laid my hand; I stood upon the floor  
Of the bride-chamber, and I saw the bride,  
Lovelier than any dream, stand by the side  
Of the gold bed, with hands that hid her face:  
One cry of joy I gave, and then the place  
Seemed changed to hell as in a hideous dream.

“Still did the painted silver pillars gleam  
Betwixt the scented torches and the moon;  
Still did the garden shed its odorous boon  
Upon the night; still did the nightingale  
Unto his brooding mate tell all his tale:  
But, risen ’twixt my waiting love and me,  
As soundless as the dread eternity,  
Sprung up from nothing, could mine eyes behc  
A huge dull-gleaming dreadful coil that rolled

In changing circles on the pavement fair.  
'Then for the sword that was no longer there  
My hand sank to my side; around I gazed,  
And 'twixt the coils I met her grey eyes, glazed  
With sudden horror most unspeakable;  
And when mine own upon no weapon fell,  
For what should weapons do in such a place,  
Unto the dragon's head I set my face,  
And raised bare hands against him, but a cry  
Burst on mine ears of utmost agony  
'That nailed me there, and she cried out to me,  
'O get thee hence; alas, I cannot flee!  
They coil about me now, my lips to kiss.  
O love, why hast thou brought me unto this?'

"Alas, my shame! trembling, away I slunk,  
Yet turning saw the fearful coil had sunk  
To whence it came, my love's limbs freed I saw,  
And a long breath at first I heard her draw  
As one redeemed, then heard the hard sobs come,  
And wailings for her new accurséd home.  
But there outside across the door I lay,  
Like a scourged hound, until the dawn of day;  
And as her gentle breathing then I heard  
As though she slept, before the earliest bird  
Began his song, I wandered forth to seek  
Thee, O strange man, e'en as thou seest me, weak  
With all the torment of the night, and shamed  
With such a shame as never shall be named  
To aught but thee—Yea, yea, and why to thee?  
Perchance this ends all thou wilt do for me?—  
What then, and have I not a cure for that?  
Lo, yonder is a rock where I have sat  
Full many an hour while yet my life was life,  
With hopes of all the coming wonder rife.

No sword hangs by my side, no god will turn  
This cloudless hazy blue to black, and burn  
My useless body with his lightning flash;  
But the white waves above my bones may wash,  
And when old chronicles our house shall name  
They may leave out the letters and the shame,  
That make Admetus, once a king of men—  
And how could I be worse or better then?"

As one who notes a curious instrument  
Working against the maker's own intent,  
The herdsman eyed his wan face silently,  
And smiling for a while; and then said he,—  
"Admetus, thou, in spite of all I said,  
Hast drawn this evil thing upon thine head,  
Forgetting her who erewhile laid the curse  
Upon the maiden, so for fear of worse  
Go back again; for fair-limbed Artemis  
Now bars the sweet attainment of thy bliss;  
So taking heart, yet make no more delay  
But worship her upon this very day,  
Nor spare for aught, and of thy trouble make  
No semblance unto any for her sake;  
And thick upon the fair bride-chamber floor  
Strew dittany, and on each side the door  
Hang up such poppy-leaves as spring may yield;  
And for the rest, myself may be a shield  
Against her wrath—nay, be thou not too bold  
To ask me that which may not now be told.  
Yea, even what thou deemest, hide it deep  
Within thine heart, and let thy wonder sleep,  
For surely thou shalt one day know my name,  
When the time comes again that autumn's flame  
Is dying off the vine-boughs, overturned,  
Stripped of their wealth. But now let gifts be

To her I told thee of, and in three days  
Shall I by many hard and rugged ways  
Have come to thee again to bring thee peace.  
Go, the sun rises and the shades decrease."

Then, thoughtfully, Admetus gat him back  
Nor did the altars of the Huntress lack  
The fattest of the flocks upon that day.  
But when night came, in arms Admetus lay  
Across the threshold of the bride-chamber,  
And naught amiss that night he noted there,  
But durst not enter, though about the door  
Young poppy-leaves were twined, and on the floor,  
Not flowered as yet, with downy leaves and grey,  
Fresh dittany beloved of wild goats lay.

But when the whole three days and nights were  
done,  
The herdsman came with rising of the sun,  
And said, "Admetus, now rejoice again,  
Thy prayers and offerings have not been in vain  
And thou at last mayst come unto thy bliss;  
And if thou askest for a sign of this,  
'Take thou this token; make good haste to rise,  
And get unto the garden-close that lies  
Below these windows sweet with greenery,  
And in the midst a marvel shalt thou see,  
Three white, black-hearted poppies blossoming,  
Though this is but the middle of the spring".

Nor was it otherwise than he had said,  
And on that day with joy the twain were wed,  
And 'gan to lead a life of great delight;  
But the strange woeful history of that night,  
The monstrous car, the promise to the king,  
All these through weary hours of chiselling



## ENGLISH TALES IN VERSE

Were wrought in stone, and in Diana's wall  
Set up, a joy and witness unto all.

But neither so would wingéd time abide,  
The changing year came round to autumn-tide,  
Until at last the day was fully come  
When the strange guest first reached Admetus' home.  
Then, when the sun was reddening to its end,  
He to Admetus' brazen porch did wend,  
Whom there he found feathering a poplar dart,  
Then said he, "King, the time has come to part,  
Come forth, for I have that to give thine ear  
No man upon the earth but thou must hear".

Then rose the king, and with a troubled look  
His well-steeled spear within his hand he took,  
And by his herdsman silently he went  
As to a peakéd hill his steps he bent  
Nor did the parting servant speak one word,  
As up they climbed, unto his silent lord:  
Till from the top he turned about his head  
From all the glory of the gold light, shed  
Upon the hill-top by the setting sun;  
For now indeed the day was well-nigh done,  
And all the eastern vale was grey and cold;  
And when Admetus he did now behold,  
Panting beside him from the steep ascent,  
One much-changed godlike look on him he bent,  
And said, "O mortal, listen, for I see  
Thou deemest somewhat of what is in me;  
Fear not! I love thee, even as I can  
Who cannot feel the woes and ways of man  
In spite of this my seeming; for indeed  
Now thou beholdest Jove's immortal seed;  
And what my name is I would tell thee now,  
If men who dwell upon the earth as thou

Could hear the name and live; but on the earth,  
With strange melodious stories of my birth,  
Phœbus men call me, and Latona's son.

“And now my servitude with thee is done,  
And I shall leave thee toiling on thine earth,  
This handful, that within its little girth  
Holds that which moves you so, O men that die;  
Behold, to-day thou hast felicity,  
But the times change, and I can see a day  
When all thine happiness shall fade away;  
And yet be merry, strive not with the end!  
Thou canst not change it; for the rest, a friend  
This year has won thee who shall never fail:  
But now indeed, for nought will it avail  
To say what I may have in store for thee,  
Of gifts that men desire; let these things be,  
And live thy life, till death itself shall come,  
And turn to nought the storehouse of thine home;  
Then think of me; these feathered shafts behold,  
That here have been the terror of the wold,  
Take these, and count them still the best of all  
Thine envied wealth, and when on thee shall fall  
By any way the worst extremity,  
Call upon me before thou com'st to die,  
And lay these shafts with incense on a fire,  
That thou mayst gain thine uttermost desire.”

He ceased, but ere the golden tongue was still  
An odorous mist had stolen up the hill,  
And to Admetus first the god grew dim,  
And then was but a lovely voice to him,  
And then at last the sun had sunk to rest,  
And a fresh wind blew lightly from the west  
Over the hill-top, and no soul was there;  
But the sad dying autumn field-flowers fair,

Rustled dry leaves about the windy place,  
Where even now had been the godlike face,  
And in their midst the brass-bound quiver lay.  
Then, going further westward, far away,  
He saw the gleaming of Peneus wan  
'Neath the white sky, but never any man,  
Except a grey-haired shepherd driving down  
From off the long slopes to his fold-yard brown  
His woolly sheep, with whom a maiden went,  
Singing for labour done and sweet content  
Of coming rest; with that he turned again,  
And took the shafts up, never sped in vain,  
And came unto his house most deep in thought  
Of all the things the varied year had brought.

Thenceforth in bliss and honour day by day  
His measured span of sweet life wore away.  
A happy man he was; no vain desire  
Of foolish fame had set his heart a-fire;  
No care he had the ancient bounds to change,  
Nor yet for him must idle soldiers range  
From place to place about the burdened land,  
Or thick upon the ruined corn-fields stand;  
For him no trumpets blessed the bitter war,  
Wherein the right and wrong so mingled are,  
That hardly can the man of single heart  
Amid the sickening turmoil choose his part;  
For him sufficed the changes of the year,  
The god-sent terror was enough of fear  
For him; enough the battle with the earth,  
The autumn triumph over drought and dearth.

Better to him than wolf-moved battered shield.  
O'er poor dead corpses, seemed the stubble-field  
Danced down beneath the moon, until the night  
Grew dreamy with a shadowy sweet delight,

And with the high-risen moon came pensive thought,  
And men in love's despite must grow distraught  
And loiter in the dance, and maidens drop  
Their gathered raiment, and the fifer stop  
His dancing notes the pensive drone that chid,  
And as they wander to their dwellings, hid  
By the black shadowed trees, faint melody,  
Mournful and sweet, their soft good-night must be.

Far better spoil the gathering vat bore in  
Unto the pressing shed, than midst the din  
Of falling houses in war's waggon lies  
Besmeared with redder stains than Tyrian dyes;  
Or when the temple of the sea-born one  
With glittering crowns and gallant raiment shone,  
Fairer the maidens seemed by no chain bound,  
But such as amorous arms might cast around  
Their lovely bodies, than the wretched band  
Who midst the shipmen by the gangway stand;  
Each lonely in her speechless misery,  
And thinking of the worse time that shall be,  
When midst of folk who scarce can speak her name,  
She bears the uttermost of toil and shame.

Better to him seemed that victorious crown,  
That midst the reverent silence of the town  
He oft would set upon some singer's brow  
Than was the conqueror's diadem, blest now  
By lying priests, soon, bent and bloody, hung  
Within the thorn, by linnets well besung,  
Who think but little of the corpse beneath,  
Though ancient lands have trembled at his breath.

But to this king—fair Ceres' gifts, the days  
Whereon men sung in flushed Lyæus' praise  
Tales of old time; the bloodless sacrifice

Unto the goddess of the downcast eyes  
 And soft persuading lips; the ringing lyre  
 Unto the bearer of the holy fire  
 Who once had been amongst them—things like these  
 Seemed meet to him men's yearning to appease.  
 These were the triumphs of the peaceful king.

And so, betwixt seed-time and harvesting,  
 With little fear his life must pass away;  
 And for the rest, he, from the self-same day  
 That the god left him, seemed to have some share  
 In that same godhead he had harboured there:  
 In all things grew his wisdom and his wealth,  
 And folk beholding the fair state and health  
 Wherein his land was, said, that now at last  
 A fragment of the Golden Age was cast  
 Over the place, for there was no debate,  
 And men forgot the very name of hate.

Nor failed the love of her he erst had won  
 To hold his heart as still the years wore on,  
 And she, no whit less fair than on the day  
 When from Iolchos first she passed away,  
 Did all his will as though he were a god,  
 And loving still, the downward way she trod.

Honour and love, plenty and peace, he had;  
 Nor lacked for aught that makes a wise man glad,  
 That makes him like a rich well-honoured guest  
 Scarce sorry when the time comes, for the rest,  
 That at the end perforce must bow his head.

And yet--was death not much remembered,  
 As still with happy men the manner is?  
 Or, was he not so pleased with this world's bliss,  
 As to be sorry when the time should come  
 When but his name should hold his ancient hon

While he dwelt nowhere? either way indeed,  
Will be enough for most men's daily need,  
And with calm faces they may watch the world,  
And note men's lives hither and thither hurled,  
As folk may watch the unfolding of a play—  
*Nor this, nor that was King Admetus' way;*  
For neither midst the sweetness of his life  
Did he forget the ending of the strife,  
Nor yet for heavy thoughts of passing pain  
Did all his life seem lost to him or vain,  
A wasteful jest of Jove, an empty dream;  
Rather before him did a vague hope gleam,  
That made him a great-hearted man and wise,  
Who saw the deeds of men with far-seeing eyes,  
And dealt them pitying justice still, as though  
The inmost heart of each man he did know;  
This hope it was, and not his kingly place  
That made men's hearts rejoice to see his face  
Rise in the council hall: through this, men felt  
That in their midst a son of man there dwelt  
Like and unlike them, and their friend through all;  
And still as time went on, the more would fall  
This glory on the king's beloved head,  
And round his life fresh hope and fear were shed.

Yet at the last his good days passed away,  
And sick upon his bed Admetus lay,  
'Twixt him and death nought but a lessening veil  
Of hasty minutes; yet did hope not fail,  
Nor did bewildering fear torment him then,  
But still, as ever, all the ways of men  
Seemed clear to him: but he, while yet his breath  
Still held the gateway 'gainst the arms of death,  
Turned to his wife, who, bowed beside the bed,  
Wept for his love, and dying goodlihead,

And bade her put all folk from out the room,  
Then going to the treasury's rich gloom  
To bear the arrows forth, the Lycian's gift.  
So she, amidst her blinding tears, made shift  
To find laid in the inmost treasury  
Those shafts, and brought them unto him; but he,  
Beholding them, beheld therewith his life,  
Both that now past, with many marvels rife,  
And that which he had hoped he yet should see.

Then spoke he faintly, "Love, 'twixt thee and me  
A film has come, and I am failing fast:  
And now our ancient happy life is past;  
For either this is death's dividing hand,  
And all is done, or if the shadowy land  
I yet escape, full surely if I live  
The god with life some other gift will give,  
And change me unto thee: e'en at this tide  
Like a dead man among you all I bide,  
Until I once again behold my guest,  
And he has given me either life or rest:  
Alas, my love! that thy too loving heart  
Nor with my life or death can have a part.  
O cruel words! yet death is cruel too:  
Stoop down and kiss me, for I yearn for you  
E'en as the autumn yearneth for the sun.

"O love, a little time we have been one,  
And if we now are twain, weep not therefore;  
For many a man on earth desireth sore  
To have some mate upon the toilsome road,  
Some sharer of his still increasing load,  
And yet for all his longing and his pain  
His troubled heart must seek for love in vain,  
And till he dies still must he be alone—  
But now, although our love indeed is gone,

Yet to this land as thou art leal and true,  
Set now thine hand to what I bid thee do;  
Because I may not die; rake up the brands  
Upon the hearth, and from these trembling hands  
Cast incense thereon, and upon them lay  
These shafts, the relics of a happier day,  
Then watch with me; perchance I may not die,  
Though the supremest hour now draws anigh  
Of life or death—O thou who madest me,  
The only thing on earth alike to thee,  
Why must I be unlike to thee in this?  
Consider, if thou dost not do amiss  
To slay the only thing that feareth death  
Or knows its name, of all things drawing breath  
Upon the earth: see now for no short hour,  
For no half-halting death, to reach me slower  
Than other men, I pray thee—what avail  
To add some trickling grains unto the tale  
Soon told, of minutes thou dost snatch away  
From out the midst of that unending day  
Wherein thou dwellest? rather grant me this  
To right me wherein thou hast done amiss,  
And give me life like thine for evermore.”

So murmured he, contending very sore  
Against the coming death; but she meanwhile,  
Faint with consuming love, made haste to pile  
The brands upon the hearth, and thereon cast  
Sweet incense, and the feathered shafts at last;  
Then, trembling, back unto the bed she crept,  
And lay down by his side, and no more wept,  
Nay scarce could think of death for very love  
That in her faithful heart for ever strove  
’Gainst fear and grief: but now the incense-cloud  
The old familiar chamber did enshroud,



And on the very verge of death drawn close,  
Wrapt both their weary souls in strange repose,  
That through sweet sleep sent kindly images  
Of simple things; and in the midst of these,  
Whether it were but parcel of their dream,  
Or that they woke to it as some might deem,  
I know not, but the door was opened wide,  
And the king's name a voice long silent cried,  
And Phœbus on the very threshold trod.  
And yet in nothing liker to a god  
Than when he ruled Admetus' herds; for he  
Still wore the homespun coat men used to see  
Among the heifers in the summer morn,  
And round about him hung the herdsman's horn.  
And in his hand he bore the herdsman's spear  
And cornel bow, the prowling dog-wolf's fear;  
Though empty of its shafts the quiver was.

He to the middle of the room did pass,  
And said, "Admetus, neither all for nought  
My coming to thee is, nor have I brought  
Good tidings to thee; poor man, thou shalt live  
If any soul for thee sweet life will give  
Enforced by none: for such a sacrifice  
Alone the Fates can deem a fitting price  
For thy redemption; in no battle-field,  
Maddened by hope of glory life to yield,  
To give it up to heal no city's shame  
In hope of gaining long-enduring fame;  
For whoso dieth for thee must believe  
That thou with shame that last gift wilt receive,  
And strive henceforward with forgetfulness  
The honied draught of thy new life to bless.  
Nay, and moreover such a glorious heart  
Who loves thee well enough with life to part

But for thy love, with life must lose love too,  
Which e'en when wrapped about in weeds of woe  
Is godlike life indeed to such an one.

“And now behold, three days ere life is done  
Do the Fates give thee, and I, even I,  
Upon thy life have shed felicity  
And given thee love of men, that they in turn  
With fervent love of thy dear love might burn.  
The people love thee and thy silk-clad breast,  
Thine open doors, have given thee better rest  
Than woods of spears or hills of walls might do,  
And even now in wakefulness and woe  
The city lies, calling to mind thy love,  
Wearying with ceaseless prayers the gods above.  
But thou—thine heart is wise enough to know  
That they no whit from their decrees will go.”

So saying, swiftly from the room he passed;  
But on the world no look Admetus cast,  
But peacefully turned round unto the wall  
As one who knows that quick death must befall:  
For in his heart he thought, “Indeed too well  
I know what men are, this strange tale to tell  
To those that live with me: yea, they will weep,  
And o'er my tomb most solemn days will keep,  
And in great chronicles will write my name,  
Telling to many an age my deeds and fame.  
For living men such things as this desire,  
And by such ways will they appease the fire  
Of love and grief: but when death comes to stare  
Full in men's faces, and the truth lays bare,  
How can we then have wish for anything,  
But unto life that gives us all to cling?”

So said he, and with closed eyes did await,  
Sleeping or waking, the decrees of fate.

But now Alcestis rose, and by the bed  
 She stood, with wild thoughts passing through her head.  
 Dried were her tears, her troubled heart and sore  
 Throbbled with the anguish of her love no more.  
 A strange look on the dying man she cast,  
 Then covered up her face and said, "O past!  
 Alas, that such a tale my heart can tell!  
 Ah, how I trusted him! what love was mine!  
 How sweet to feel his arms about me twine,  
 And my heart beat with his! what wealth of bliss  
 To hear his praises! all to come to this,  
 That now I durst not look upon his face,  
 Lest in my heart that other thing have place,  
 That which I knew now, that which men can hate.

"O me, the bitterness of God and fate!  
 A little time ago we two were one;  
 I had not lost him though his life was done,  
 For still was he in me—but now alone  
 Through the thick darkness must my soul make  
 For I must die: how can I live to bear  
 An empty heart about, the nurse of fear?  
 How can I live to die some other tide,  
 And, dying, hear my loveless name outcried  
 About the portals of that weary land  
 Whereby my shadowy feet should come to

"Alcestis! O Alcestis, hadst thou known  
 That thou one day shouldst thus be left:  
 How hadst thou borne a living soul to leave  
 Hadst thou not rather lifted hands to Heaven  
 To turn thine heart to stone, thy front  
 Through this wondrous world thy  
 And careless, as Diana g  
 || nitiless

Her shafts smite down? Alas! how could it be?  
Can a god give a god's delights to thee?  
Nay rather, Jove, but give me once again,  
If for one moment only, that sweet pain,  
The love I had while still I thought to live:  
Ah! wilt thou not, since unto thee I give  
My life, my hope?—But thou—I come to thee.  
Thou sleepest: O wake not, nor speak to me!  
In silence let my last hour pass away,  
And men forget my bitter feeble day.”

With that she laid her down upon the bed,  
And nestling to him kissed his weary head,  
And laid his wasted hand upon her breast,  
Yet woke him not; and silence and deep rest  
Fell on that chamber. The night wore away  
Mid gusts of wailing wind, the twilight grey  
Stole o'er the sea, and wrought his wondrous change  
On things unseen by night, by day not strange,  
But now half seen and strange; then came the sun,  
And therewithal the silent world and dun  
Waxing, waxed many-coloured, full of sound,  
As men again their heap of troubles found,  
And woke up to their joy or misery.

But there, unmoved by aught, those twain did lie,  
Until Admetus' ancient nurse drew near  
Unto the open door, and full of fear  
Beheld them moving not, and as folk dead;  
Then, trembling with her eagerness and dread,  
She cried, “Admetus! art thou dead indeed?  
Alcestis! livest thou my words to heed?  
Alas, alas, for this Thessalian folk!”

But with her piercing cry the king awoke,  
And round about him wildly 'gan to stare,  
As a bewildered man who knows not where



And he fell wondering if his life were gain,  
So wrapt as then in loneliness and pain;  
Yet therewithal no tears would fill his eyes,  
For as a god he was.

Then did he rise  
And gat him down unto the Council-place,  
And when the people saw his well-loved face  
They cried aloud for joy to see him there,  
And earth again to them seemed blest and fair.  
And though indeed they did lament in turn,  
When of Alcestis' end they came to learn,  
Scarce was it more than seeming, or, at least,  
The silence in the middle of a feast,  
When men have memory of their heroes slain.  
So passed the order of the world again,  
Victorious Summer crowning lusty Spring,  
Rich Autumn faint with wealth of harvesting,  
And Winter the earth's sleep; and then again  
Spring, Summer, Autumn, and the Winter's pain;  
And still and still the same the years went by.

But Time, who slays so many a memory,  
Brought hers to light, the short-lived loving queen;  
And her fair soul, as scent of flowers unseen,  
Sweetened the turmoil of long centuries.  
For soon, indeed, Death laid his hand on these,  
The shouters round the throne upon that day.  
And for Admetus, he, too, went his way,  
Though if he died at all I cannot tell;  
But either on the earth he ceased to dwell,  
Or else, oft born again, had many a name.  
But through all lands of Greece Alcestis' fame  
Grew greater, and about her husband's twined,  
Lived, in the hearts of far-off men enshrined.  
See I have told her tale, though I know not

hat men are dwelling now on that green spot  
 nigh Boëbeis, or if Pheræ still,  
 With name oft changed perchance, adown the hill  
 Still shows its white walls to the rising sun.  
 —The gods at least remember what is done.

Strange felt the wanderers at his tale, for now  
 Their old desires it seemed once more to show  
 Unto their altered hearts, when now the rest,  
 Most surely coming, of all things seemed best:—  
 —Unless, by death perchance they yet might gain  
 Some space to try such deeds as now in vain  
 They heard of amidst stories of the past;  
 Such deeds as they for that wild hope had cast  
 From out their hands—they sighed to think of it,  
 And now as deedless men they there must sit.

Yet, with the measured falling of that rhyme  
 Mingled the lovely sights and glorious time,  
 Whereby, in spite of hope long past away,  
 In spite of knowledge growing day by day  
 Of lives so wasted, in despite of death,  
 With sweet content that eve they drew their breath,  
 And scarce their own lives seemed to touch them more  
 Than that dead queen's beside Boëbéis' shore;  
 Bitter and sweet so mingled in them both,  
 Their lives and that old tale, they had been loth,  
 Perchance, to have them told another way.—  
 So passed the sun from that fair summer day.

June drew unto its end, the hot bright days  
 Not gat from men as much of blame as praise,  
 As rainless still they passed, without a cloud;  
 And growing grey at last, the barley bowed  
 Before the south-east wind. On such a day  
 These folk amid the trellised roses lay,

And careless for a little while at least,  
Crowned with the mingled blossoms held their feast:  
Nor did the garden lack for younger folk,  
Who cared no more for burning summer's yoke  
Than the sweet breezes of the April-tide;  
But through the thick trees wandered far and wide  
From sun to shade, and shade to sun again,  
Until they deemed the elders would be fain  
To hear the tale, and shadows longer grew:  
Then round about the grave old men they drew,  
Both youths and maidens; and beneath their feet  
The grass seemed greener, and the flowers more sweet  
Unto the elders, as they stood around.

So through the calm air soon arose the sound  
Of one old voice as now a wanderer spoke.  
"O friends, and ye, fair loving gentle folk,  
Would I could better tell a tale to-day;  
But hark to this, which while our good ship lay  
Within the Weser such a while ago,  
A Fleming told me, as we sat alone  
One Sunday evening in the Rose-garland,  
And all the other folk were gone a-land  
After their pleasure, like sea-faring men.  
Surely I deem it no great wonder then  
That I remember everything he said,  
Since from that Sunday eve strange fortune led  
That keel and me on such a weary way—  
Well, at the least it serveth you to day."





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